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British colonial policy and the transfer of power in British Guiana, 1945-1964.

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BRITISH COLONIAL POLICY
AND
THE TRANSFER OF POWER
IN
BRITISH GUIANA, 1945-1964.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates British colonial policy in British Guiana over the period 1945 to 1964. It is particularly concerned with the British response to nationalist demands for colonial development, self government and eventually, political independence.

The British were the colonial rulers of British Guiana from 1803 to 1966. Throughout much of this period their main concern was the maintenance of a stable environment for the operation of expatriate capital. The neglect of physical and social infrastructure provided fertile ground for colonial disaffection which surfaced, in an extreme form, in the disorders of the 1930s. Chronic colonial neglect also created conditions conducive to the growth of radical nationalist politics and in 1946 a group of middle class intellectuals launched the **Political Affairs Committee**. This group of radical nationalists, disenchanted with the frequent promises of colonial development and constitutional advance which seldom kept pace with colonial expectation, attacked British colonial policy in the colony demanding immediate and profound changes.

The 1939 Royal Commission was critical of imperial rule and recommended profound socio-economic, political and constitutional changes in the colony. One important consequence of the 1939 Report was HMG's willingness to concede universal adult suffrage. By 1948 such a commitment had been given to British Guiana and when prior to the general election scheduled for 1953, HMG also

announced a further willingness to consider constitutional advance for the colony, the first mass based multi-ethnic party was formed in 1950.

This study examines the ensuing relationship between the **People's Progressive Party** and the colonial administration. The PPP was the outgrowth of the PAC and continued the attack on HMG's policy in Guiana, demanding in the first instance immediate self-government, and independence within the near future.

The party was dissatisfied with the constitutional advance conceded by the 1951 Commission and on winning the 1953 general election exploited its strategic position in government to further the case for a more liberal constitution. HMG accused the PPP Government of intending to establish a one party communist dictatorship in the colony and, withdrawing the constitution, dismissed the government.

After a brief period in which an interim administration, appointed by HMG, disgraced itself in office, the PPP was reelected to government in 1957. Upon its return to office the PPP immediately reiterated its demands for immediate self-government and independence within the foreseeable future. In 1960 HMG accepted the British Guiana case and promised independence after the 1961 general election. But, by this time, regional geopolitics had assumed global significance with the US-Cuba conflict and the Washington administration, unhappy with a PPP administration on the north coast of South America, opposed

the grant of independence until the PPP had been relieved of office.

The years 1962-1963 were therefore exploited by the opposition, with external assistance, to spread racial strife, create civil unrest and physical violence aimed either at unseating the PPP government, or securing a postponement of the grant of independence, or encouraging HMG to withdraw the constitution and dismiss the government.

The campaign of civil unrest and physical violence was effective and plans were made for the removal of the PPP from office. The introduction of proportional representation in 1964 seemed the most likely way of achieving the desired objectives of those opposed to the PPP. Opposing the PPP in the 1964 general election under the new electoral system were the People's National Congress of Forbes Burnham, a founding member of the PPP who terminated his membership in 1955. The United Force, the other major party, was formed in 1960 by the successful Portuguese businessman, Peter D'Aguiar. While neither party gained a greater percentage of the votes than the PPP, they agreed on an improbable coalition government and the opportunity was seized by HMG to dismiss the PPP. With a government acceptable to the Washington administration in office the way was clear for the grant of independence and this HMG duly conceded in 1966.

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INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the transfer of power to the people during the final stages of British colonialism which lasted in British Guiana from 1803 to 1966. In examining the main aspects of political change and constitutional development in post-war Guiana the study attempts to illuminate not just an important phase of Guianese history but more importantly some of the general issues which characterised the nationalist politics and colonial administration of the decolonisation period.

After the second great war HMG adopted a policy of measured constitutional advance throughout her empire and the process was no different in Guiana. This sequence of measured advance was usually prefaced either by a visit of a constitutional commission or a London conference at which the increment of advance was negotiated. These sessions were seldom cordial affairs and the results were frequently criticised for falling far short of colonial expectation. But, apart from a few exceptional circumstances, each change represented a recognisable step forward to the ultimate goal of independence.

The period 1945 to 1964, the focus of this study, was chosen primarily on constitutionalist grounds. World War II precipitated a new phase in British colonial policy characterised by a more enlightened approach to the development and welfare of colonial peoples in the British Empire. In the West Indies, this new approach was accorded heightened urgency and additional

incentive by the publication of the indictments of imperial policy in the Royal Commission Report, 1938-1939.¹ One immediate response to that Report was HMG's willingness to concede universal adult suffrage.² The enfranchisement of nearly eighty percent of the eligible population represented a qualitative advance in the process of political change and constitutional development in Guiana, and affected in profound ways the political process and nationalist politics throughout the period of this study.

The year 1964, on the other hand, marked the defeat of the nationalist People's Progressive Party of Cheddi Jagan by the political coalition of the People's National Congress of Forbes Burnham and the United Force of Peter D'Aguiar. HMG had been reluctant to concede further power to the PPP which it accused of falling under the influence of communist leadership.³ The Washington administration, on the other hand, was opposed to the politics of the PPP, which it deemed communist and therefore a danger to the hemispheric interests of the United States of America; it protested the transfer of power to such an administration in a region which had acquired considerable geo-

¹ Great Britain, Report of the West India Royal Commission, 1938-1939, (London: 1945). Cmd, 6607.

² Great Britain, Statement of Action taken on the Recommendations of the West India Royal Commission, 1945, (London: 1945). Cmd, 6656.

³ Great Britain, Suspension of the Constitution in British Guiana, (London: 1953). Cmd, 8980; Great Britain, Report of the British Guiana Constitutional Commission, 1954, (London: 1954). Cmd, 9274 and House of Commons Debates, 518, 22 and 28 October 1953 and 521, 7 December 1953.

political sensitivity in the confrontational politics of the Cold War era. Though disappointed with the politics of the PPP, HMG was nevertheless by 1960 committed to granting independence to the colony.⁴ Efforts were therefore made by the local opposition, and the American administration to delay and frustrate HMG's policy. Because of their efforts, the internal politics of British Guiana became increasingly antagonistic between 1955-1961 and violent between 1962-1964. In this sense the dismissal of the PPP administration in 1964 also marked the end of a period in which physical violence and diplomatic pressure were successfully orchestrated by political parties and external influences opposed to the PPP.

The study therefore focuses on the process of political change as well as negotiated constitutional development in response to nationalist pressure stimulated by the PPP. This process involved the actual concession of adult suffrage, the evolution of the first mass based political parties and the mobilisation of the electorate for the nationalist struggle against the imperial power. Popular politics was manifested not only in party membership but in voting patterns, and between 1950 and 1964 the PPP was the most popular political organisation, winning four successive elections in 1953, 1957, 1961 and finally 1964.

⁴ Great Britain, Report of the British Guiana Constitutional Conference, 1960, (London: 1960). Cmd, 998.

In 1955 Forbes Burnham, a founding member of the PPP broke away forming, in 1957, the PNC. This latter organisation became the preferred party of both Whitehall and the Washington administration and along with the UF, formed in 1960, were opposed to Independence under a PPP administration. They contested and lost all the elections held after their formation but because proportional representation, introduced in 1963, made it possible to by-pass the party with the highest return at the polls they were preferred to the PPP and formed the 1964 administration which led the colony to independence in 1966.

The methodology of the thesis involves an examination of the processes of political development and constitutional advance, eschewing however a preoccupation with the dynamics of party political behaviour which is properly the purview of the political scientist. The principal area of concern is the interaction of the party organisations with, firstly, the electorate, secondly, the imperial power and to a lesser extent with external agents influencing the transfer of power. The thesis necessarily considers the developing attitudes of the imperial power and its vulnerability or resistance to external pressure impinging on its colonial administrative function. The two most significant external forces affecting HMG's colonial administration of the Guiana colony, were the USA and the UN.

The material perused in pursuance of this study was drawn from a variety of primary and secondary sources, dealing with Guiana as well as with other colonies involved in the process of

decolonisation. While a number of important files pertaining to aspects of nationalist politics of British Guiana for the period 1950-1953 are still inaccessible, the bulk of the original information was nevertheless derived from official documents, newspapers and party political pamphlets. Additionally, a number of interviews with persons directly involved in Guiana's nationalist struggle provided very important information, and gave greater immediacy and authority to the analysis.

These interviews were the more significant because of the unavailability of much of the primary historical material for the later years of the period. For example, Colonial Office Despatches and the replies of the British Guiana Governors for the years 1960-1964, obviously of considerable significance to a study of this nature, have not yet been opened to public scrutiny. The same is true of the 1960-1964 Consular documents between the American Consular Representatives to Guiana and the State Department. Because of these and other deficiencies it was necessary to rely heavily on Official publications, House of Commons Debates and newspaper accounts of the events occurring between 1960 and 1964.

With regard to British Guiana and particularly the period researched there have been a number of books which have dealt with specific problems or themes in the history of nationalist politics. The most notable are those by Cheddi Jagan, Forbidden Freedom: The Story of British Guiana, (London: 1954) and The West on Trial: The Fight for Guyana's Freedom, (Budapest: 1972). The

former is his personal account of the 1953 Emergency while the latter, though essentially biographical, is nevertheless one of the best accounts of nationalist politics in Guiana. Though drawing on a wide variety of sources both are undocumented, and, while constantly alluding to British policy, were published before the 1950 documents became available. The two studies by Jagan were therefore denied the benefits to be derived from access to the official documents pertaining to the nationalist struggle.

The compilation of some of the speeches of Forbes Burnham by C.A. Nascimento and R.A. Burrowes, (eds.), A Destiny to Mould: Selected Discourses by the Prime Minister of Guyana, (London: 1970) offer valuable insights into the political evolution of a neo-colonial authoritarian ruler and the manner in which he wheedled himself to power. More recently, however, two interesting interpretations of nationalist politics have been produced by Thomas. J. Spinner, A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945-1983, (Boulder:1984) and R.A. Burrowes, The Wild Coast: An Account of Politics in Guiana, (Cambridge: 1984). Both accounts trace the development of political conflict within the colony and the struggle for independence but are deficient in several important respects. They were published before the release of the 1953 official documents, American and British, and are therefore very weak on essential primary source material. While they are based substantially on Jagan's works they were nevertheless deprived of an insight into the official considerations which informed Whitehall's response to nationalist

politics in Guiana. This thesis advances the work of these volumes by exploring the official documents and by focusing more precisely on British colonial policy, as distinct from nationalist politics only.

Politics apart, Guiana has been a fertile area for ethnic studies and while they are almost in their entirety concerned with ethnic conflict, the most important studies bordering on the area of my research are Percy Hintzen, The Cost of Regime Survival: Racial Mobilisation, Elite Domination and Control of the State in Guyana and Trinidad, (Cambridge: 1989); Leo Despres, Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana, (Chicago: 1967); Cynthia H. Enloe, Ethnic Conflict and Political Development, (Boston: 1973) and Roy A. Glasgow, Guyana: Race and Politics among Africans and East Indians, (The Hague: 1970). In each the author analyses the development of inter-ethnic interaction and its influence on the nature of evolving nationalist politics.

The role of the United Nations in the nationalist struggle in Guyana is treated in Basil Ince, Decolonisation and Conflict in the United Nations: Guyana's Struggle for Independence, (Cambridge: 1974). The involvement of the American Central Intelligence Agency and the American labour movement in the nationalist politics of Guiana between 1953 and 1964 are covered by Serafino Romualdi, Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labour Ambassador in Latin America, (New York: 1967); Phillip Agee, Inside the Company: CIA Diary, (Harmondsworth: 1975); Ronald Radosh, American Labor and United States Foreign Policy,

(New York: 1969) and Fred Hirsch, An Analysis of Our AFL-CLO Role in Latin America or Under the Cover of the CIA, (San Jose: 1974). An interesting article by Colin Henfrey, "Foreign Influence in Guyana: the Struggle for Independence" in Emmanuel De Kadt ed. Patterns of Foreign Influences in the Caribbean, (London: 1972) sheds much light on the subject while Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House, (Boston: 1965) provides an authoritative account of the attitude of the Kennedy Administration to the Jagan government. The significance of these secondary sources derive firstly, from the paucity of official documentation on the topic and secondly, from the fact that some of the authors were either directly involved in the process of political destabilisation or located in the decision making machinery and were therefore party to privileged information.

The evolution of the PPP is admirably covered by Francis Drakes' thesis, "The Development of Political Organisation and Political Consciousness in British Guiana, 1870-1964: The Conscientizacao of the Middle Class and the Masses", University of London, 1989 together with Raymond Smith, British Guiana, (London: 1962) and Ralph Premdas, "The Rise of the First Mass Based Multi-Ethnic Party in Guyana" Caribbean Quarterly, XX, (1974). There are two important studies on constitutional development in Guiana, firstly Cecil Clementi, A Constitutional History of British Guiana, (London: 1937) which covers the early period up to 1928 and Mohamed Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development in Guyana: 1921-1978, (Georgetown: 1978).

However, there is no one work which describes and interprets the nationalist struggle as a chronological and thematic whole. This thesis is therefore the first systematic narrative account of the period based on the available archival material.

The purpose of this study therefore is to set out the main sequence of events utilising the fullest range of sources available. It is intended to provide a study faithful to the facts and analyzing both the nationalist and the imperial responses to terminal colonial politics, to highlight hitherto inaccessible material, and to suggest certain interpretations which advance the present understanding of the nationalist politics and imperial policy in Guiana.

Chapter One discusses the development of colonial society, examines the early contentious issues derived from prolonged colonial domination and expatriate capital penetration. Special coverage is given to the partial nature of the political process and constitutional development which consistently deprived Guianese of an effective role in the colonial decision making process. It also explores the early beginnings of colonial discontent and the resultant demands for a more liberal political and decision making process.

Chapter Two examines the development of nationalist politics from the **Political Affairs Committee** in the immediate post war period to the formation of the first mass based multi ethnic political party, the **People's Progressive Party** in 1950. These local

developments took place in propitious times, when HMG had adopted a more liberal attitude to the transfer of power, as witnessed in the 1950 Waddington Commission Report on constitutional advance in the colony.⁵

Chapter Three then examines the first liberal constitutional concessions, the emergence of the PPP at the 1953 general election, the limited efforts at socio-economic reforms attempted by the PPP administration and the hostility which the party's efforts produced. **Chapters Four and Five** discuss the Emergency in Guiana consequent upon the withdrawal of the Waddington Constitution and the dismissal of the PPP administration. They also focus on reactions to the emergency and the workings of the Interim Administration which succeeded the dismissed PPP administration. There is no known work on these issues completed after the 1984 release of the official documents and in the circumstances this thesis represents the first attempt to closely scrutinise British policy decisions utilising these documents. It is also the first to utilise American documentation to examine the American response to the emergence of nationalist politics in the colony.

Chapter Six interprets the failure of the Interim Administration and HMG's decision to reintroduce democratic procedures in the colony. This resulted in the 1957 general election and the return to office of the PPP under a very limited constitution

⁵ Great Britain, Report of the British Guiana Constitutional Commission, 1950-1951, (London: 1951). Col, 280.

which it opposed, demanding further constitutional advance. The 1960 Constitutional Conference produced an undertaking from HMG to grant independence to the colony in the immediate future. This is the first serious examination of the Interim administration, of the official response to the period and the process through which the colony was returned to democratic rule.

Chapter Seven examines reactions to the imminent transfer of power to the PPP which was criticised for its communist commitment. Attention is paid to the period of civil unrest, HMG's retreat from the 1960 commitment and the substitution of a constitutional arrangement which ousted the PPP administration in 1964.

Chapter Eight constitutes the **Conclusion**. Here an attempt is made to draw out in a final consecutive summary the underlying issues and events to which earlier chapters have pointed. It reevaluates the attitude and commitment of Whitehall planners to the Guiana situation, a unique case study in the Caribbean and the influence of successive Washington administrations on the formulation of policy to cope with that situation.

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There are several persons and institutions whose generous assistance was of fundamental importance to the completion of this work. Its first impetus came from the work undertaken in Guiana by the PAC (1946-50) and subsequently the PPP (1950-1964) which held office in 1953 and from 1957 to 1964. The hopes and aspirations of that movement and the eventual debacle of its demise have long deserved to be the subject of a full-scale research project into the political history of the period 1945-1964.

My own experience, firstly as a political activist within the movement and, subsequently, as a teacher of the history of the period, has provided me with added motivation to attempt a more sober understanding of the period.

I am deeply grateful to Professor Andrew Porter who undertook the supervision of the study. His contribution was particularly crucial because of the breadth of experience which he brought to criticisms of the work. His comments and discussions, guiding me towards deeper enquiry and research of the material were always of great value.

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Most of all, I wish to thank the people of Guyana who made my education possible and who, through their consistent effort to comprehend and defeat the tyranny of the Forbes Burnham regime, have provided me with the obligation to complete this task. This study is a token of my indebtedness and gratitude.

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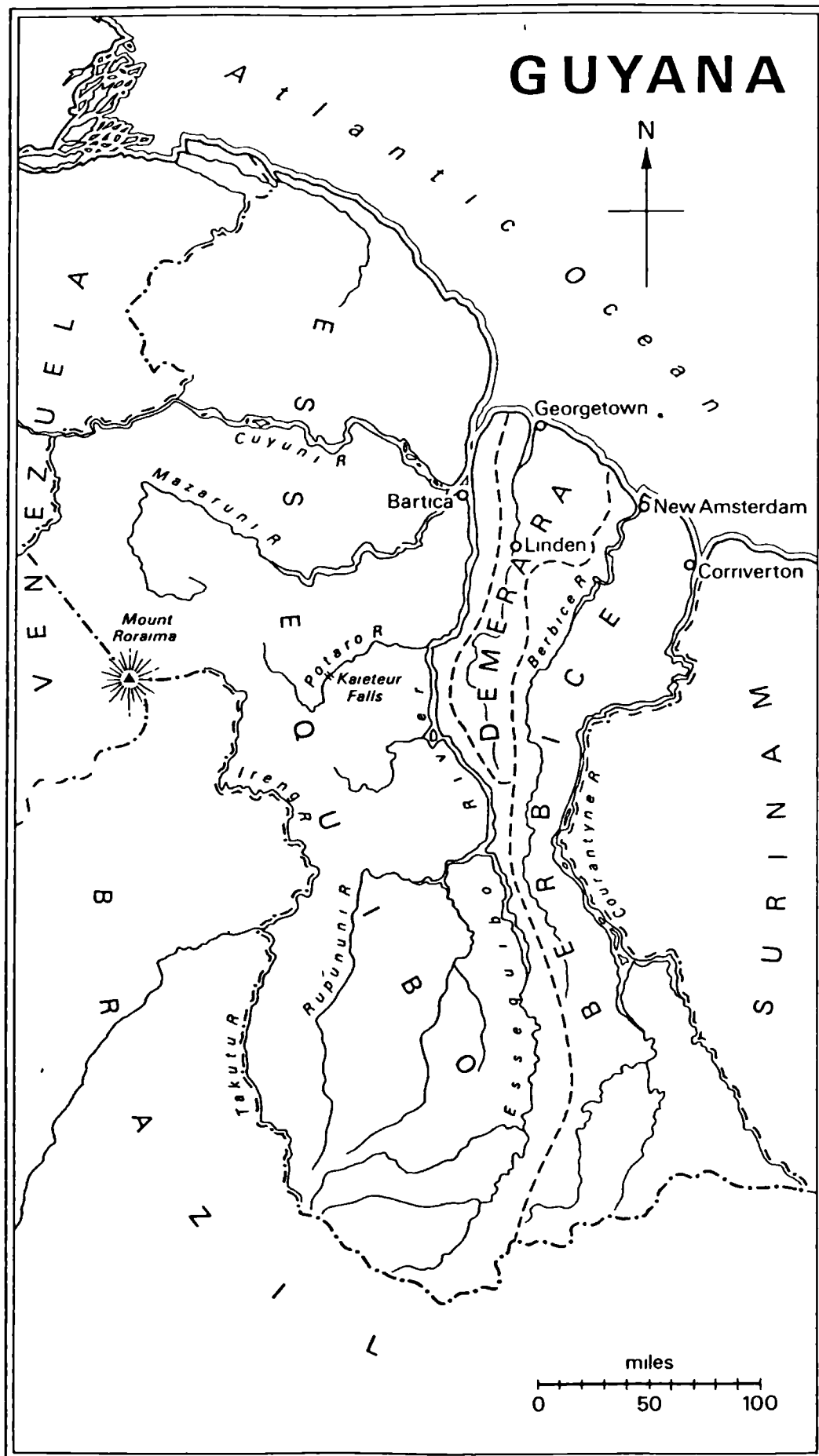
Creighton, Margery Jones and Sybil Patterson whose collective effort provided the opportunity for me to conduct this study.

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James G. Rose

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1992.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A/C	Record Group of the United Nations.
AG.	Attorney General.
*ALCAN.	Aluminium Company of Canada.
BGEIA.	British Guiana East Indian Association.
BGLP.	British Guiana Labour Party.
BGLU.	British Guiana Labour Union.
BGTUC.	British Guiana Trade Union Council.
CAB.	Cabinet Documents.
CC.	Combined Court.
CO.	Colonial Office.
CP.	Court Of Policy.
CQ.	Caribbean Quarterly.
CS.	Caribbean Studies.
CSA.	Civil Service Association.
DEMBA.	Demerara Bauxite Company.
ECD.	East Coast Demerara.
FO.	Foreign Office Records.
FR.	Financial Representative.
GAOR	Official Records of the United Nations General Assembly
GIWU.	Guiana Industrial Workers Union.
GMWU.	Guiana Mine Workers' Union.
HCD.	House of Commons Debate.
HCL.	House of Lords Debate.
ICFTU.	International Confederation of Trade Unions.
ISER.	Institute of Social and Economic Research.
JCH.	Journal of Caribbean History.
JICH.	Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History.
JCCP.	Journal of Commonwealth Comparative Politics.
LCP.	League of Coloured People.
MCC.	Minutes of the Court of Policy.
MCP.	Minutes of the Court of Policy.
MEC.	Minutes of the Executive Council.
MLA	Minutes of the Legislative Assembly
MLC.	Minutes of the Legislative Council.
MPCA.	Manpower Citizens' Association.
MSC	Minutes of the State's Council.
NAG.	National Archives, Guyana.
NDP.	National Democratic Party.
NIP.	National Independence Party.
NLF.	National Labour Front.
OAG.	Officer Administering the Government.
*ORIT.	INTER-AMERICAN REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF WORKERS
PAC.	Political Affairs Committee.
PNC.	People's National Congress.
PPP.	People's Progressive Party.

*AFL-CIO. AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOUR - CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS
AIFLD. AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF FREE LABOUR DEVELOPMENT.

PREM. Records of the Prime Ministers Office.
~~PSI~~ *PUBLIC SERVICE INTERNATIONAL*
 RG. Record Group (United States National Archives).
 SES. Social and Economic Studies.
 SPA. Sugar Producers' Association.
 UDP. United Democratic Party.
 UF. United Force.
 UFWP. United Farmers and Workers Party.
 WBD. West Bank Demerara.
 WCD. West Coast Demerara.
 WFTU. World Federation of Trade Unions.
 WPEO. Women's Political and Economic Organisation.

CHAPTER ONE.

COLONIAL POLICIES AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN

BRITISH GUIANA: 1621-1945.

Introduction.

This chapter provides an overview of the evolution of the colonial state in British Guiana from its beginnings, addressing the main features of its internal development as well as the role of the metropolitan state and other external forces which shaped that process.

It is not intended here to isolate political actions from economic forces, nor will the chapter deal with the economic considerations which influenced the formation and nature of the plantation economy separately from the social and cultural circumstances which were themselves subject to these economic forces. The intention is to investigate the interplay of forces, within the Imperial world and elsewhere, which produced the colonial state of 1945.

British Guiana,¹ is one of three Guianas, occupying the north coast of South America between the Amazon and the Orinoco rivers. The region was sighted by Christopher Columbus in 1498 and

¹ It may be argued that historically there were really five Guianas: Spanish (now Venezuela), Portuguese (now Brazil), French (still French Guiana or Guyane), Dutch (now Suriname) and the British.

claimed by Spain. At the outset the area² was neglected because European sailors deemed it inhospitable.²

The Spaniards made no attempt to colonise Guiana, and the initiative came from the Dutch West India Company, which established interior settlements on the Essequibo, Berbice and Demerara rivers. Despite interludes of French and English control and an influx of English settlers from the West Indies in the middle of the eighteenth century, the Dutch remained dominant until 1814, when the Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo were finally ceded to Great Britain, to become in 1831 the three counties of British Guiana.

The Economy

The early development of the economy was slow because of the infertile soil of the interior sand belt where the first settlements were located. Development was also restricted by limited land in the area. These faults forced a relocation of agricultural activity, first to the banks of the adjacent rivers and then to the lower reaches towards the coast.

The movement down river had profound consequences for the subsequent development of the colony. Down river migration was

². Alvin O. Thompson, Colonialism and Underdevelopment. (Bridgetown: 1987). p. 2. See also, Cornelis Goslinga, The Dutch in the Caribbean and the Wild Coast, 1580-1680. (Assen: 1971). pp. 56-60 in which he argues that the Dutch were attracted to the Coast for some of the very reasons other Europeans found it inhospitable.

occasioned by problems upriver. It was also found that the coastal soil was exceedingly fertile. The main difficulty on the coast was the need for recurrent expenditure on sea defence, and drainage and irrigation. The coastal strip of Guiana is four to five feet below high water sea level and this meant an elaborate system of sea defence in the shape of dams, concrete sea walls and groynes, constructed to encourage accretion, to protect settlements and agricultural areas from flooding.³

In order to make the land productive the new colonists undertook, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, expensive empoldering works. Using Dutch technology and African labour, the planters constructed an intricate network of drainage canals, dams, sluices, kokers and bridges which in the main resisted the encroachments of the floodwater, drained the swampland, conserved the fertility of the land and humanised the environment.⁴ It was an expensive and continuing exercise, which inescapably added to the cost of the unit produced. Guianese sugar therefore always incurred a higher production cost than that of other Caribbean producers and tended always to require special metropolitan consideration.

The rapid increase in the production of sugar which accompanied the movement down river was not immediately at the expense of

³ The rest of this section depends very much on G.O. Case, Report on the Drainage and Irrigation of the Front Lands of Guiana, (Georgetown: 1942).

⁴ Walter Rodney, A History of Guianese Working People 1880-1905. (Baltimore: 1981). p. xviii.

other crops. Coffee and cotton and even cacao continued to be cultivated for export. These crops remained the mainstay of those suffering from capital starvation and labour shortage.

In the decades just before the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, Guiana was the largest producer of cotton in the world and the largest producer of coffee in the Empire.⁵ From around 1810 however there began the expected decline in the production of these commodities. Large quantities of cheap American cotton pushed the Guiana commodity off the British market while it was cheaper to produce a similar quality of coffee in Ceylon. These developments took place against a background in which British planters had seized the initiative in the colony and were inclined to invest in sugar rather than in any other commodity.⁶ From the 1820s onwards Guiana was set on the rigid course of mono-culture agriculture.

The Sugar Industry

The sugar economy achieved complete dominance of the British Guiana economy in the late nineteenth century.⁷ But this was the century in which the industry encountered some of its fiercest challenges. The legal termination of chattel slavery, the cost of immigration to replenish the labour supply, fierce competition

⁵ Rawle E. G. Farley, "Aspects of the Economic History of British Guiana 1781-1852" (Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1956). pp. 28-62.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The following account relies heavily on the work of Alan A. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves: The political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904. (New Haven: 1972), 24-33 and 160-213.

from cheaper producers, the loss of preference in the British market in the 1840s, the problems posed by European beet sugar production and the general fluctuations in the price mechanism of cane sugar on the international market all conspired to wreck the viability of the industry.

Faced with almost inevitable "ruination", the 1897 Royal Commission, by persuading Her Majesty's Government to re-examine its former unhelpful response to earlier cries of distress, was instrumental in winning some relief for the industry. The United Kingdom Government undertook to exclude subsidised beet sugar from the British market. This timely Imperial intervention helped to keep the industry alive but its fragility and dependency was once again emphasised.⁸

The war of 1914-1918 resulted in the dislocation of European beet production and delivered high and stable prices to Guianese and other cane sugar producers, but it also resulted in extended production and eventual overproduction.⁹ This was particularly damaging to the Guianese economy because in the post war years

⁸ Ibid., 214-254. See also, J R. Mandle, The Plantation Economy: Population and Economic change in Guyana, 1838-1960, (Philadelphia: 1973) pp. 17-31, Rodney, pp. 60-90, and Henry A. Will, "Colonial Policy and Economic Development in the British West Indies; 1895-1903." Economic Historical Review, XXIII, 1, 1970, 132-135.

⁹ A.F.R. Webber, Centenary History and Handbook of British Guiana, (Georgetown: 1930). 343-44. The irony was that the Guiana sugar industry could not expand to cash in on this lucrative windfall.

Britain undertook to expand her own beet sugar production.¹⁰ The late 1920s and the early 1930s would have been particularly calamitous but for the fact that Imperial and Colonial preferences shielded the industry from the ultimate disaster of low prices.

The industry was nevertheless in a serious recession. Mechanical repairs, the replacement of worn parts and equipment and the upkeep and improvement of drainage which had not been done during the war years were now long overdue but neither external earnings nor future prospects justified such a venture.¹¹ By the time of the second great war mechanical malfunctioning and a fickle market conspired to wreck the industry. During the second war the Ministry of Food took all the exportable surplus of sugar under a bulk purchase agreement. The prices obtained were more rewarding than those of the pre-war period but there was considerable erosion of capital, since it was impossible to purchase what was needed to improve, or even to maintain, the factories, the amenities for labour and the proper cultivation of the field.¹² During this period, in spite of an assured market and high prices, the output of sugar declined, from 196,502 tons

¹⁰ G A. Abbott argues that this was in direct response to the problem of import shortages experienced during the war. "Stabilisation policies in the West Indian Sugar Industry" Caribbean Quarterly, (CQ) IX, 1. 55.

¹¹ Ibid. See also, Webber, 340-44.

¹² Bookers Sugar: Supplement to the Accounts of Booker Brothers, McConnell and Company Limited. 1954. (London: 1954). p. 9.

in 1938 to 157,201 in 1945 and exports from 183,478 tons to 132,595.¹³

By 1945 sugar with a value of about \$21,000,000, alone constituted more than one half of British Guiana exports. The industry was the chief source of internal revenue by way of direct taxation and sugar duty. It provided employment for about 25,100 employees resident on the plantations and another 13,000 who were not. The industry concentrated upon measures to increase the efficiency of cane cultivation and sugar refining rather than on expanding cultivation over a greater area. This process, while it had the very desirable advantage of enhancing the competitive nature of the commodity, resulted in the gradual reduction of the labour force and this tended to increase the misery of the working people.

Gold and Diamonds

The mining industry in British Guiana has a long but undistinguished history. Exploration for gold dates back to the Elizabethan preoccupation with the mythical golden city of El Dorado. A more realistic attempt to locate precious deposits on the Berbice River was undertaken in the 1720s but this was also

¹³ "Commerce" in Colonial Office, Annual report of B.G for the year 1947, (London: 1947). (British Guiana Report 1947).

unsuccessful.¹⁴ In 1863, an English Company was established to explore the Essequibo River and achieved a notable success when commercial deposits were located on the Cuyuni, a tributary of the Essequibo.¹⁵ A sensitive response to Venezuelan territorial claims and a legislative body, dominated by sugar and fearful of losing its monopoly of labour encouraged the virtual abandonment of the project.¹⁶

In the 1880s, at the height of a depression in the sugar economy exploration was renewed and gold was found on the Mazaruni, Potaro and Cuyuni rivers, tributaries of the Essequibo.¹⁷ In 1886, under the administration of Governor Henry Irving, the Court of Policy was induced to pass the necessary enactment establishing the legal basis of the gold mining industry.¹⁸ The industry showed considerable early promise and by the 1893-94 production year output had reached 138,528 ounces.¹⁹

This buoyancy was short lived as the Venezuelans had by this time persuaded the United States to intervene in the territorial

¹⁴ H.J.Perkins, Notes on British Guiana and its Gold Industry (London: 1896). p. 10 and CO. 111/341, Governor Francis Hincks to Newcastle, 104, 16 June 1863.

¹⁵ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁶ Leslie B.Rout, Which Way Out? An Analysis of the Guyana-Venezuela Border Dispute, (East Lansing: 1971). p. 12 and J.A. Braveboy-Wagner, The Venezuela-Guyana Border Dispute: Britain's Colonial Legacy in America, (Boulder: 1984). p. 100-104.

¹⁷ Perkins, 11.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁹ William Francis and John Mellin, (eds.), The British Guiana Handbook 1922, (Georgetown: 1922), pp. 116-118.

dispute with the United Kingdom Government over lands in the gold producing areas.²⁰

Mining did not come to a halt but the earlier enthusiasm displayed by overseas investors did not revive particularly because a promised return to a policy of preference made sugar interests once again determined to restrict economic development solely to the coastal strip. Thereafter mining remained deprived until a less hostile policy was adopted after 1945.

The output of gold was 22,533 ounces in 1945. This represented a fall in production from 41,919 in 1938. The declining fortunes in the industry were mirrored in the contraction of the labour force which declined from about 12,000 in 1938 to just under 7,000 in 1945. It was widely believed that gold production could be doubled within a few years given a more constructive policy by the colonial administration.

The diamond industry tended to be a subsidiary of the gold mining industry and its fortunes waxed and waned with the former. Additionally, a considerable period of intense Foreign and Colonial Office negotiations with De Beers kept the diamond industry beyond the reach of other private investors until well after the first great war.²¹ After the war His Majesty's

²⁰ Braveboy-Wagner, pp. 102-104 and Henry Steele Commager, (ed). Documents of American History, (New York: 1973). I, 620-622.

²¹ Ann Spackman, "The Role of Private Companies in the Politics of Empire: A Case Study of Bauxite and Diamond

Government's suspicions of American investors produced an embargo on interior development while the lack of enthusiasm on the part of British mining companies for whom the area was reserved, kept the industry undercapitalised and underdeveloped and by 1945 production had declined to 15, 442 carats from the 1938 peak of 31,690.²²

The Bauxite Mining Industry

The Demerara Bauxite Company (Demba) was, from the beginning, (1916), a subsidiary of the Aluminium Company of Canada (Alcan), which was itself a subsidiary of Aluminium Company of America (Alcoa).²³ Demba was formed on 6 April 1916, to evade the restrictions which the British attempted to place in the way of an American company's acquisition of strategic mineral rights in a British colony.²⁴

The agreement made between the Crown Agents for the Colonies acting for the colony of British Guiana and the ostensibly

Companies in Guiana in the early 1920s" Social and Economic Studies, (SES). XIV, 3, September 1975. 341-87.

²² Francis and Mellin, pp. 116- 118.

²³ See Memorandum of Association enclosed in CO. 111/606, OAG, Clementi to A Bonar Law, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 June 1916. See also, CO. 111/603, D.F. Campbell to The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 March 1915 and CO. 111/609, The Crown Solicitor to Government Secretary, 13 June 1916. These documents are located in the Attorney-General's Chambers, Guyana. (AGC-G)

²⁴ CO. 111/627, W.C. Neilson to Governor Collett, 17 April 1919. (AGC-G).

Canadian company sought to ensure that the company was registered in Great Britain or in a British Colony or Dominion; that the Company would at all times remain a British Company; that the Company so registered, would have its principal place of business in Her Majesty's Dominions; and that a majority of the Company's directors, including the Chairman, would be British subjects. ²⁵

It is important to note some of the more important clauses in the original agreement, particularly as they related to the organisation of production methods in British Guiana. Clause (iii) [b] of the Memorandum of Association, specified that in addition to mining, that the Company would manufacture, "**alumina, aluminium, soda hydrochloric acids and by products** " in Guiana.²⁶

Then under section [f] of the same clause, the Company was empowered to

"develop, construct, transmit, lease, purchase and acquire hydraulic, mechanical and electric power or any or either of them, and utilise the same for the purposes or for any other purposes ..."²⁷

From this it would seem that the intention was for the Company to refine locally the ore extracted from the mines in British

²⁵ Alcan Aluminium Ltd., "Alcan in the Caribbean," Memorandum prepared for the Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs. November 1969. p. 12. (AGC-G).

²⁶ See Memorandum of Agreement, Enclosed in CO. 111/606, OAG to A Bonar Law, 29 June 1916 and CO. 111/654, Governor Graeme Thomson to Secretary of State, Amery, 3 December 1924.

²⁷ Ibid.

Guiana. Secondly, it would seem that the company was being nudged towards the development of hydro-electric power from the water system of Guianese rivers.

From a small hand mining beginning in 1917, the Demerara Company was exporting over 100,000 tons annually by 1935, nearly 400,000 tons by 1938 and in 1943, the peak year nearly 2,000,000 tons. Production fell to less than 1,000,000 tons in the two following years but was expected to rise again to a level not as high as the 1943 peak but considerably higher than the 1945 level. In 1945 the exports accounted for nearly 30 percent of the colony's exports and it provided 15 percent of the government's total revenue and about 9 percent of the national income.²⁸

At the time of peak production in 1943 the company employed an all white supervisory staff of about 82 and a total work force of some 3,000.²⁹ The total number of employees was reduced to about 1,500 by 1945.³⁰

The Rice Industry

Rice, with bauxite and sugar, formed the tripod on which the post-war colonial economy stood. It was introduced around 1782 from Louisiana by the French.³¹ It was cultivated as slave food

²⁸ British Guiana Report, 1937-1946.

²⁹ Ashton Chase, A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana, 1960-1961, (Georgetown: 1964), p. 126.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ James Rodway, "Labour and Colonisation," Timehri, IV, 1919. 22 and 36.

and was particularly favoured by the Guiana maroons. As early as 1813 limitations were placed on its development when the suggestion that it be grown as an alternate crop was rejected by the plantocracy.³² Immediately after the 1812 constitutional reforms of Governor Carmichael gave the planters unfettered political control of the colony, and at a time when the economy was under siege, the suggestion to expend resources in developing another crop was summarily dismissed.

The idea was allowed to rest until around 1853 when an expatriate company attempted to cultivate about 150 acres of former sugar lands made totally unproductive by uncontrollable floodwater.³³ This initiative, like a few before and after, failed because of drought conditions, excessive flooding and inexperience with large scale cultivation.³⁴

In 1865, a group of Indian immigrants undertook the cultivation of this crop. Although at first they achieved only partial success, they persisted and expanded their efforts.³⁵ By 1866 the rice under cultivation had grown to about 200 acres and it

³² Ibid.

³³ William Russell, "Land Titles," Timehri, V, 1886. 104.

³⁴ Lesley M. Potter, "The Paddy Proletariat and the Dependent Peasantry: The East Indian Rice Growers in British Guiana, 1895-1920." Paper Presented at the Ninth Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians, Barbados, April 1977. p. 16.

³⁵ Ibid.

was still expanding.³⁶ In the 1880s underemployment and unemployment, as well as the need to augment the meagre estate earnings, forced all groups to seek other employment and many turned to rice cultivation. In the same period HMG agreed to policies aimed at keeping the time-expired immigrant in the colony by offering him crown lands for sale.³⁷

This policy enjoyed very limited success. The scheme was too transparently planter biased but more importantly, the lands were either too small or too poorly drained to encourage enthusiasm. The immigrants displayed a marked preference for purchasing lands elsewhere or renting lands from small landowners.³⁸ This desire of the East Indian peasantry to own land stimulated a demand for land preparation and distribution and for a better system of drainage and irrigation in the coastal belt.

The 1897 Royal Commission accepted both demands and recommended that they be pursued with vigour.³⁹ Nothing of the sort occurred. Throughout the early decades of the twentieth century,

³⁶ Lesley.M.Potter, "Internal Migration and Resettlement of East Indians in Guyana, 1870-1920." (Ph.D Thesis, McGill University, 1975). pp. 63-66 and Dwarka Nath, A History of Indians in Guyana, (London: 1950). pp. 110-119.

³⁷ Potter, " Internal Migration and Resettlement of East Indians...", p. 64 and James G Rose, "The Repatriation Controversy and the Beginning of An East Indian Village System" Guyana History Gazette, 1, 1989. 51-67.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See Memorandum of Botanist, G S.Jenman, The Botanic Gardens, Great Britain, The West India Royal Commission 1897 (London: 1897). Cmd., 8655. (The Norman Commission Report 1897) Appendix, C. 11, No. 166, 136-137 and Question and Answers, Ibid., No. 167, 138-139.

the same demand was repeated by various agencies, committees and Royal Commissions. Both the colonial government and HMG were indifferent to the pressures. After the first world war the success of the industry, in spite of the difficulties, became its most impressive advocate.⁴⁰

By the end of the war, the cultivation of rice extended more or less continuously throughout the front lands of the coastal zone from the Pomeroon to the Corentyne as well as in the deltaic islands of Leguan and Wakenaam in the Essequibo.⁴¹ The crop was well suited to the heavy clayey soils of these locations and, as a result of steady expansion during the war years, it came to provide the chief means of livelihood for between 13,000 and 15,000 cultivators.⁴²

In spite of fluctuations in output during the inter-war years, 1918-1939, the industry attained a more stable production at a higher level than at any time in its history.⁴³ From 1939 onwards three factors favoured this development: the removal of the competition of the much cheaper Burma rice which held a large part of the market in the Eastern Caribbean; the provision of increasing amounts of capital for drainage and irrigation schemes

⁴⁰ Nath, 112.

⁴¹ Potter, "Internal Migration..." 46.

⁴² Great Britain, Report of the British Guiana and British Honduras Settlement Commission, (London: 1948). Cmd., 7533. (The Evans Commission Report 1948). p. 45.

⁴³ Ibid., 46.

to increase production in the face of the serious wartime shortages of basic foodstuffs and the supporting activities of the Department of Agriculture, which from the time of its reorganisation in 1927 worked steadily for the increased utilisation of pure-line seeds, and encouraged higher and more consistent standards in grades of rice offered to the export market.

By 1945 the crop covered an area of about 88, 000 acres and the total production of more than 100,000 tons of paddy yielded 63,800 tons of rice which, after providing for local consumption, left a margin of about 25,000 tons for export to the islands of the Eastern Caribbean.

Most of the peasants rented their land and were thus never assured of either proper drainage or irrigation, essential requisites of the industry.⁴⁴ Further, as the viability of the industry became increasingly apparent, the conditions became increasingly oppressive. Mills were in the hands of landlords and this considerably reduced the profit to the peasant cultivator. A similar effect was seen in marketing which was under the colonial authority.⁴⁵ The official arrangement produced revenues from export duties and sales totally unrelated to the returns received by the peasant cultivator. Finally, by its reluctance to promote drainage and irrigation schemes and land distribution, the colonial administration was unsupportive

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

of the industry and, in reality, hampered its growth.

The Timber Industry

Over 78,500 square miles, or, roughly five eighths of the country is covered with forests. The wide variety of species, hard and soft, makes this resource very valuable both on the local and export markets. But until quite recent times, Guiana was a net importer of North American and British lumber.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the colonial regime, as if out of extreme perversity, displayed a marked preference for building in bricks and in concrete. It needs to be said however that British building technology was brick oriented and it was therefore not unnatural for them to have displayed this preference. At the same time if timber was widely used later colonial administrators were fearful of outbreaks of large and catastrophic fires.⁴⁷

One serious impediment to timber extraction was the lack of infra-structure. The product could not be transported over the rapids upriver. The absence of roads or a railway system greatly reduced the accessibility and marketing of the product.⁴⁸ Until

⁴⁶ As late as 1954, British Guiana imported to the value of 242,964 Guiana dollars white and pitch pine from Canada. See, British Guiana, Report of the Department of Forestry for the Year 1954, (Georgetown: 1954). p. 6, para., 30.

⁴⁷ Particularly in the city of Georgetown, which was ravished by fire on several occasions, building in bricks became a preferred way of construction.

⁴⁸ For a factual report on the state of this industry See, Report of a Mission Organised by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development at the Request of the Government of British Guiana, 1953. (Baltimore: 1953). (IBRD Report, 1953),

the post 1945 period, only small quantities of timber were cut and exported. In 1945 exports had declined from 439,165 to about 307,658 cubic feet and earned the colony about \$378,246.⁴⁹ The potential of local timber as the base material of the charcoal, shingle and sleeper industries was severely under-utilised and not much was done to investigate the feasibility of paper, chipboard or plywood manufacture.

Social Relations within a Colonial State.

Social relations within the Guiana colonies were always a matter of singular importance. On arrival, the Dutch encountered an Amerindian society that was heterogeneous.⁵⁰ There were a number of tribes, or nations, some composed of numerous sub-tribes.⁵¹ Because they had come as traders, the Dutch did not attempt to subdue the Indians by force of arms. They sought by peaceful intercourse to encourage the Indians to increase their production of exportable crops and to share their food supplies.⁵² The

pp. 63-66 and 307-338.

⁴⁹ British Guiana Annual Report, 1938-1946.

⁵⁰ Julian H. Steward, Handbook of South American Indians (Washington: 1963) Vol. IV. See also, William Hillhouse, Indian Notices, (Georgetown: 1825) p. 7 and Rev. William Brett, Mission Work Among The Indian Tribes in the Forests of Guiana, (London: 1881). p. 14.

⁵¹ Professor Menezes has refuted the tendency to identify numerous tribes and has instead listed four tribes and three sub-tribes. British Colonial Policy Towards the Amerindians in British Guiana, (Clarendon: 1977). pp. 19-23.

⁵² Menezes, 42. See also George Edmondson, "The Dutch in West Guiana" English Historical Review, XVI, (1901). 640-75. In this study the author discusses the case of Commandeur Groenewegel who contracted marriage to the daughter of a cacique in order to cement friendly relations. This type of arrangement was not altogether unusual.

Indians were by custom free agents and efforts to induct them into the European system of production bred resentment.⁵³

When Africans were introduced, they rebelled against their enslavement. They escaped into the forested regions, the swamp-lands and up the rivers and creeks. Many of these locations were the familiar haunts of the Indians, who were encouraged to hunt the Africans for an additional bounty.⁵⁴ There thus developed an intricate system of alliances and antagonisms overseen by the Dutch. There was the Amerindian in alliance with the Dutch against the Spaniards and their Indian allies. There was the African resisting Dutch enslavement but at war with the Amerindians. Always, however, there were the Dutch manipulating and exploiting ethnic differences to ensure the survival and profitability of the colonial enterprise.

During the post-emancipation period, Portuguese, East Indians and Chinese labourers were imported, on contract, to satisfy the labour demands of the sugar producer who found it difficult to relate to free labour. They preferred a docile and an immobile labour force. These infusions produced a segmented population in which group relations were mutually exclusive.⁵⁵

⁵³ Menezes, 46-7.

⁵⁴ Alvin O. Thompson, Some Problems of Slave Desertion in Guiana 1750-1814, (ISER: 1976) and James G. Rose, "Runaways and Maroons in the History of British Guiana," History Gazette, 4 January 1989. 9.

⁵⁵ Brian Moore, Race, Power and Segmentation in Colonial Society: Guyana after Slavery, 1838-1891, (New York: 1987). pp. 213-223.

Because of the war no census was undertaken in 1941 but a rough estimate of the population in 1945 gave the population at 373,598.⁵⁶ Its composition on the basis of race was as follows:

East Indians	45%
Africans	36%
Mixed	11%
Amerindians	4%
European	3%
Chinese	1%

The Europeans dominated in government and the managerial levels of industry and commerce. The Africans, though still to be found on the sugar estates were predominantly artisans. They had entered the lower rungs of the civil service and were becoming visible in the professions. The East Indians reproduced the economic patterns of their ancestral homeland and were mainly responsible for the continuation of peasant agriculture and the growth of the rice industry in particular. They too were becoming visible in the professions.⁵⁷

The Guianese social structure reflected gradual upward mobility in the various ethnic groups. There were no rigid social barriers but discrimination against upwardly mobile Coloureds, Blacks, and East Indians was not unknown. Political patronage, in which the European administrative class dispensed favours actually created tension among the various groups and maintained

⁵⁶ British Guiana Decennial Census, 1946.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

ethnic separatism which were exploited to the advantage of the ruling class.

The Development of Colonial Administration before 1920

When the colony on the Essequibo was first established around 1621 it was administered by a ship's captain acting as Commandeur. The duration of his administration was often less than a year, the time his ship was normally in the river. When he left, the incoming ship's captain succeeded to the post.⁵⁸ This arrangement continued until about 1670 when an expanding economy and population growth necessitated a more permanent administrative structure. In that year, the Zealand Chamber appointed Hendrick Rol, a sea captain and trader, as the first full time Commandeur.⁵⁹ The commandeur then became a full time administrator, who was assisted in the duties of colonial administration by the managers of the company's estates.⁶⁰

This early administration had to ensure law abiding and religious conduct of the colonists, to enhance trade and production and safeguard the rights and privileges of the Company.⁶¹ This first

⁵⁸ Webber, 10.

⁵⁹ James Rodway, History of British Guiana from the Year 1668 to the Present, (Georgetown: 1891). I, 13. and Netscher, 37.

⁶⁰ Netscher, 42.

⁶¹ For the English translation of these duties, please see, Rodway, I, 33-34.

body was called the Council of Policy and Justice.⁶² The European population was small but it contained a representative percentage of free planters, unattached to the Company. They were not considered significant enough to merit representation on this early Council.

Colonial Revenue and Political Representation

Around 1698, the Company introduced a number of taxes to raise revenue for the maintenance of what was described as "public works".⁶³ The most significant was a poll tax levied on the private planter for each of his slaves above the age of six years. Other taxes included a stamp duty, a customs duty and a convoy charge. There was also an acreage tax which, because of immediate resistance to it, was never levied. The estimated 30 odd free planters who owned about 800 slaves were expected to contribute the bulk of this revenue. Further, the collected sum was placed in a Company Chest/Fund administered exclusively by Company officials in areas not altogether relevant to the free planting community.⁶⁴ The accumulated sum was small and often inadequate for its intended purpose but the imposition of the tax was nevertheless deliberately partial and in this sense unjust.

⁶² Ibid. The Dutch title was "Raad van Politie en Justicie".

⁶³ Cecil Clementi, The Constitutional History of British Guiana, (London: 1937). p. 25. On 10 September 1698, a head tax of two and a half guilders for each slave and an annual due of one stiver per acre for private plantations. Other taxes were added subsequently.

⁶⁴ For a history of the Fund, CO. 114/8, Minutes of The Court of Policy, (MCP). 21 July 1815. (NAG).

This form of taxation without representation was resented and the free planters agitated for representation on the Council.⁶⁵ In 1739, the Company conceded one representative to the free planters in the six man Council, a concession which did not go far enough to mollify the resentment of the free planting community.⁶⁶ Over the years effective representation for the free planting community remain a contentious issue.

After some concessions to unofficial white opinion in 1796 the Court of Policy in 1803 consisted of eight members including The Director-General; the Commandeur of Essequibo; the Fiscal of Essequibo; the Fiscal of Demerara; two colonists from Essequibo and two members from Demerara. In the first instance the elected members, the unofficial section of the Court, were to be elected from a double vote from the Colleges of Kiezers or Electors of which there were two, one each in Demerara and Essequibo, each consisting of seven members elected by a majority of the votes of the inhabitants possessing not fewer than twenty five slaves, such votes to be in writing and signed by the voter. The Kiezers were officers of the Burgher Militia who were the Justices of the Peace and the rural constables. The tenure of office of the College of Kiezers, as subsequently defined by Governor D'Urban in 1831, was to be for life unless the party resigned or ceased to be an inhabitant.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Clementi, 38.

⁶⁶ Rodway, I, 102.

⁶⁷ CO. 112/15, Goderich to Governor D'Urban, No. 1, 18 March 1831. It is important to note that until 1831, Berbice was administered by a different system which because the colony, was

This position was materially modified without substantially affecting the functions of the financial representatives, by a proclamation of the acting Governor, Commander Hugh Lyle Carmichael in 1812, consolidating the two Colleges of Kiezers and Financial Representatives.⁶⁸ The Proclamation remained operative but unconfirmed until in 1831, when the three provinces were united, it was annulled by a Royal Instruction restoring the pre-existing arrangement.⁶⁹

Politics was an activity reserved for the planters and the administrative elite, but growing within the system was a middle group of non-white property owners and professionals who were beginning to make their presence felt. A section of this group began to articulate its interests through a Political Reform Club formed in 1887 and their aspirations provided the administrative elite with just the kind of rationale it needed to enhance its position vis-a-vis the plantocracy.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Sugar was no longer all powerful; the planter lobby was not as influential as it had previously been and plantations were increasingly falling into the hands of limited liability companies whose headquarters

until 1814 a private settlement, underwent very little change between 1733 and 1831.

⁶⁸ CO. 111/13, Governor Carmichael to Lord Bathurst, 23 October 1812; MCC, 18 November 1912 and L.M.Penson, "The Making Of A Crown Colony: British Guiana, 1803-1833" Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, IX, Fourth Series, 1926. 119-122.

⁶⁹ CO. 111/116, D'Urban to Goderich, No. 5, 1 August 1831 and Clementi, 437-441.

⁷⁰ CO. 111/441/2, Henry Irving to Secretary of state, 407, 22 October 1887 and 435, 11 November 1887.

were in London, where they established contacts with the officials in the Colonial Office.

In 1891 ostensibly to fulfil the aspirations of the native middle class the Colonial Office forced through a constitutional reform which did little for the middle class but significantly increased its own power in relation to the plantocracy.⁷¹ As the system developed the Governor could in theory have passed any legislation without consulting with the planters, but the Court of Policy, half of which was elected by the planters acted as the executive. Moreover, the Financial Representatives were also elected by the planters and as a result they had significant influence over the finance and administration of the colony. The only reform they cared for was that which reduced the influence of the Governor over legislation.⁷²

The Constitution as it existed up to 1891 may be summed up very briefly. It consisted of a Governor, a Court of Policy and a Combined Court, which was established around 1796. The unofficial members of the Court of Policy and Combined Court were chosen by the College of Kiezers. The functions of an Executive and Legislative Council and House of Assembly were performed by the Governor and the Court of Policy, except as regards taxation and finance, which were the concerns of the Combined Court, composed of the Governor and Members of the Court of Policy combined with

⁷¹ MCP, 3 February 1891. British Guiana (Constitution) Ordinance, 1 of 1891.

⁷² CO. 111/304, Lord John Russell to Wodehouse, 12, 31 May 1855 and Wodehouse to Labouchere, 26, 15 March 1856.

the six elected Financial Representatives. The Court of Policy passed all laws and ordinances except the Annual Tax Ordinance which was passed by the Combined Court.

During 1891 an Act was passed which came into force in 1892, effecting a considerable change in the constitution.⁷³ By the Act the Administrative functions of the Court of Policy were transferred to an executive council, and the duties of the former became purely legislative. The College of Electors was abolished and the unofficial members were thereafter elected by the direct vote of the whole body of electors. Very significantly, the Governor gained the right to select his own Executive Council.

The Combined Court had the power of imposing the Colonial taxes and discussing freely and without reserve the items on the annual estimates prepared by the Governor and Executive Council; it could reduce or reject, but not increase any item. The Court of Policy consisted of the Governor, seven official members and eight elected members. It could be prorogued or dissolved at any time by the Governor and in any case was dissolved every five years and a general election had to be held within two months of the date of dissolution. The number of Financial Representatives, who with the Court of Policy formed the Combined Court, was six.

⁷³ MCP, 3 February 1891. The British Guiana (Constitution) Ordinance, An Ordinance to alter and amend the Political Constitution of the Colony. No. 1 of 1891.

In 1881 the census gave the population excluding Amerindians, as 253,118, but the total electorate stood at only 1001 persons.⁷⁴ The 1911 population, excluding Amerindians was 296, 041, and the electorate had increased to 4,104.⁷⁵ This meant that the non-white middle class group had been allowed some limited access to the levers of power and it was not surprising that they considered the constitutional changes something of a victory.⁷⁶

The victory of the Colonial Office in 1892 had all the ingredients of a palace coup but the new arrangement nevertheless represented a notable advance in the political process. For once it was explicitly stated that the action had been taken so that the native people could begin to rule themselves, theory became practice and the former colonial practice of political exclusivism was doomed. It was not altruism which led Britain to formulate the position that it did. Representative theory demanded that those who controlled the state should only do so with the consent of the ruled. Although Britain could have pleaded special circumstances, once the colonial creole elite and the working people became politicized and began to demand their political rights, self rule could be postponed but not avoided. This process was only in its formative stages in 1891; the ruling class was not broken; power merely shifted within it and the great mass of the working people were no better off.

⁷⁴ British Guiana Decennial Census, 1881.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1911.

⁷⁶ Admittedly this was still a small percentage of the population but even so it represented a 400 percent increase.

There being no adequate and effective way for the working people to articulate their aspirations, their frustrations in 1905 flowed into the streets.⁷⁷ A strike for increased wages became a rebellion with marked racial and political overtones in which seven people died. The Crowds were reported to have chanted, "kill every white man" and in this case their venom was aptly directed, as the whites were indeed the ruling group.⁷⁸ Coincidentally, they also owned and managed every sugar estate and the major commercial houses in the colony. Widespread strikes also took place on the sugar estates but at the end of the day the socio-economic conditions of the people were not significantly changed. However, from this time onwards the working people made it their continuous quest to control their own lives and labour.

Following the 1905 disturbances there was a wave of industrial conflicts led by a Black stevedore, Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow. Critchlow, the undisputed father of trade unionism in Guiana and a leading pioneer of the trade union movement in the Caribbean, first came to public notice in 1906 when at the age of 22 he was charged with assault during a labour dispute.⁷⁹ After several short-lived attempts to form trade unions in the colony he formed

⁷⁷ Francis M. Drakes, "The 1905 protest in British Guiana: Causes, Course and Consequence." (M.A. Thesis, University of Guyana, 1981). pp. 42-51.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 71.

⁷⁹ Francis X. Mark, "Organised Labour In British Guiana" in T.G. Mathews and F.M. Andic. The Caribbean in Transition, (Rio Piedras: 1965). p. 229.

the British Guiana Labour Union in 1919.⁸⁰ This union organised among Georgetown waterfront workers and despite significant opposition by employers, union membership soared and union branches were established in nearly all the villages on the East Coast of Demerara, the West Coast, on the Essequibo coast and in Berbice. By the end of the first year the membership drawn from the urban and rural work force stood at 13,000.⁸¹ By the time the British Guiana Trade Union Council (BGTUC) was registered in 1941, there were fifteen registered trade unions in the colony with a membership of about forty thousand, about one third of the labour force. This was a considerable achievement since union membership was not encouraged by the colonial administration or the employers.⁸² The object of the BGTUC was the protection and representation of the national labour movement and it presented its demands for widespread nationalisation and the democratization of economic and political life.⁸³

Constitutional and Political Development, 1920-1935.

These developments had a significant effect on the political culture of the period. During the 1920s, the complexion of the Courts underwent profound changes. Not only was the old regime displaced in the 1926 election but given the nature of the evolving constituencies of the new incumbents and the historic

⁸⁰ Ibid., 223-233.

⁸¹ Ashton Chase, The History of Trade Unionism in Guyana, 1900-1961, (Georgetown: 1964). pp. 49-50.

⁸² Ibid., 50.

⁸³ Ibid., 101-112.

relationship between the constituencies and the colonial government, the issues and hence the tone of the debates became less conservative. Sugar continued to enjoy a high profile but it was no longer the only or, for that matter, the most important item on the agenda. There was a radical shift in local political discussion from narrow concerns and micro-planning to broader concerns of macro- economic development. Economic surveys, feasibility studies and an integrated long-term development plan were the new areas of critical concern. New industries, interior development, a more constructive approach to sea defence, drainage and irrigation and land development schemes, a redistribution of the burden of the taxation, strengthening and extending the social services, better housing, education, health, welfare, transportation, potable water supply and rural electrification became the principal focus of political debate. The most significant aspect of the change was the pressure exerted by an increasingly liberal middle class on the Governor and colonial officials to demand an end to the Imperial indifference and economic bias which so far characterised British colonial policy in Guiana.⁸⁴

Labour unrest continued into the 1920s and the economic crisis through which the colony was then passing made the conditions of the working people even worse. Then as always the working people were expected to understand that wage reductions were a necessary

⁸⁴ Great Britain, Memorandum of the Elected members of the Combined Court 1927, (London: 1928), Cmd, 3047. pp. 38-75; E.F.L.Wood, Report of His Visit to the West Indies and British Guiana; December 1921 to February 1922, (London: HMSO, 1922). pp 91-92. (The Wood Report 1922) Cmd, 1679.

condition for economic stability, but when times were better and they demanded increasing returns for their labour they were informed that the division of profits was not their concern.

In 1924, for example the increasing tension was demonstrated when the police fired on striking workers. His Majesty's Government responded to the general restiveness in the colony with a variety of commissions in attempts to acquire a better appreciation of the issues involved, to estimate the extent of the disaffection, to define the best approaches to amelioration and of course to buy time in which to manoeuvre.

The first of the commissions was led by Major E.F.L. Wood, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. The Wood Commission visited the British West Indies between December 1921 and February 1922, investigating the effects of the prolonged depression in the economy and the possibility of conceding constitutional advance. The Report reflected the outdated conservatism which informed His Majesty's Government's nineteenth century colonial policies. It was a renovated version of the old trusteeship principles which were, in any case, never consistently applied in the West Indies.

Wood reported that because there was no group qualified to govern, Her Majesty's Government should continue to hold firmly to the reins of Imperial control. Wood arrived at this conclusion by arguing that the West Indies, and particularly Guiana, represented heterogeneous societies and in such societies

one group should not be allowed to exercise the power to govern over others.⁸⁵

He also found widespread backwardness and appalling underdevelopment in which responsible government could not be conceded lest it hinder any future undertaking by HMG to provide funding for colonial development.⁸⁶ He concluded that constitutional advance should be withheld until a responsible colonial elite had been produced. In the absence of such an elite no group was fit to exercise responsible government. Wood was also disturbed by the smallness of the electorate and considered it inadvisable that liberal reforms should in the circumstances be conceded.⁸⁷

Wood's assessment of the socio-economic conditions was, if anything, impregnated with a greater degree of unreality. He found "no general physical distress". There was "little or no unemployment". He was impressed with the "cheapness of the cost of living in the tropics".⁸⁸

Throughout his report, Wood demonstrated how out of touch Europeans, even Colonial Office officials, could choose to be,

⁸⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Major Wood obviously meant the emergence of a group of colonial politicians receptive of British colonial policy decisions. Ibid., 5-9.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

while still assuming an air of superiority. In the light of what he "found" Wood did not recommend Imperial assistance. Wood believed that colonial development should be funded from the resources of the colony and so he recommended that the practice of balanced budgets and the accumulation of financial reserves be continued in spite of the hardships which these imposed on the working people.⁸⁹

These were some of the factors which prompted a group of middle class liberals, under Nelson Cannon and Anthony Webber, to form the Popular Party in 1926 to contest the election due later in the year. The franchise still excluded the vast majority of the working people from the political process. There were only 9,513 registered voters in 1921 in a population of 288,546 and women were still excluded.⁹⁰ The need for political reforms were to many people so self-evident, and the demands for immediate reforms so widespread, that they constituted a popular platform from which the new Party launched its assault on British colonial policies and the colonial representatives of the Crown.

The popular appeal of the Party was enhanced by its ability to exploit a coincidence between middle class aspirations and working people's discontent. Its General Council was made up of black middle class professionals and its mass support came from the newly formed trade union movement under Critchlow. Yet as most of these workers were still unenfranchised the Party's

⁸⁹ Ibid., 88-89.

⁹⁰ British Guiana Decennial Census, 1921.

effective support came mostly from the growing number of lower class Blacks who had recently qualified for the vote. For the 1926 election the electoral roll had increased to 11,103 out of a population of 317,026.⁹¹

Economic development provided the main plank of the party's platform. As an electoral topic it was both relevant and popular. However the conservatives were not themselves reluctant to criticise the absence of development and the growing impoverishment of the colony caused by the falling prices of the main economic export, sugar. But since the Popular Party was the only combination contesting the election, their limited radicalism and willingness to discuss important issues at street corner meetings which were attended by the working people made them the popular choice of this section of the voting community.

Elections were held on 15 October 1926 and the party secured 12 of the 14 seats. The party's victory was a severe blow to the establishment and showed that the planters' ability to influence the local electorate was now slight. The party was expected to do well but the margin of its victory heightened concerns about the radicalism of some of its candidates and in particular the economic reforms which they proposed during the election campaign. This was not an unexpected response since the reforms

⁹¹ In actual fact the restricted franchise qualification had not been reformed since 1909 when it was reduced from an annual income of \$450. to \$300. MCP, 28 June 1909 and Ordinance, No. 24 of 1909, MCP, 30 November 1909; Governor Hodgson to Secretary of State, 7 January 1909 and Secretary of State to Hodgson, 25 March 1909; Clementi, Appendix, P. pp. 493-541 and The British Guiana Official Gazette, 1 January 1926.

proposed included a modification of the system of taxation to secure greater revenue from the sugar and bauxite industries.

The colonial administration interpreted the coalition of interests, across ethnic boundaries, as indicative of a popular front bent on radical reforms which would undermine the Crown's ability to maintain the stability so essential for the development of the colony.⁹² Sugar, on the other hand, divined a threat to long held and cherished colonial privileges.⁹³ This fear seemed justified when an attempt was made by the newly elected representatives to cushion the effects of increased taxes on the already overburdened working people, by redirecting a portion of it between the sheltered sugar and bauxite industries. This provided the occasion for conservative interests to come together to find ways of nullifying the political influence and advantage which a democratic election had transferred to a section of the community threatening to the colonial economy.⁹⁴

Among those agitating for reform were that section of the community which considered access to the legislature a privilege reserved for the descendants of Europeans and those representing European economic interests in the colony. Both groups had lost influence among the electorate and so saw Crown Colony government

⁹² British Guiana, Report of the British Guiana Constitution Commission, 1927. Combined Court Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1927.

⁹³ Ibid., 5-6.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 7; Great Britain, Report of the British Guiana Commission, 1927. (London: 1927). pp. 8 and 40-41. (The Wilson-Snell Report 1927), Cmd. 2841 and WICC., XLII, July 1927. 273.

as the effective salvation of their interests in the colony.⁹⁵ They were no doubt encouraged by the knowledge that in September the Secretary of State, had requested a parliamentary commission to report on the economic conditions in the colony. A recession in the economy provided genuine grounds for the investigation. Since 1921-22 there had been a steep reduction in the colonial revenue due to a decline in the prosperity of sugar. Except for 1923, budgets had showed recurring deficits. This reversal in financial fortunes was aggravated by alternate droughts and floods in 1925 and 1926. The attempt by recently elected representatives to collect increased taxes from sugar and bauxite was therefore resisted on the grounds that industries affected by recession could not afford to pay increased taxes. Concerned at the deteriorating financial affairs of the colony HMG felt compelled to dispatch the commission.

On 16 November 1926, the Parliamentary Commission consisting of Roderick Roy Wilson, M.P., (subsequently knighted) as Chairman, Harry Snell, M.P. (subsequently, Lord) and R.R. Sedgewick of the Colonial Office, arrived in the colony "to consider and report on the economic condition of the colony, the causes which have hitherto retarded, and the measures which could be taken to promote development and any other facts which they may consider to have a bearing on the above matter".⁹⁶

⁹⁵ The Report of the British Guiana Constitution Commission, 1927, 5.

⁹⁶ The Wilson-Snell Report, 1927, transmitted by Amery to Governor Rodwell, No. 144, 25 May 1927.

There was considerable local misgivings about the functioning of this Commission. For one thing it remained virtually inaccessible to working class organisations. The Chairman was ill for the greater part of the visit and received no one. For another, it was not clear whether the Commission had constituted itself into a Finance Committee to investigate the state of the colony's finances or whether it had an interest in considering the constitutional question. There were few public sessions and popular organisations complained that they were denied access to the commission. They complained that only a partial view was presented to the Commission and as a consequence the report was biased. The Commission held a few social meetings, made a few visits and aborted its programme, leaving the colony on 17 December 1926 because the Chairman continued to be indisposed.

Although it admitted that the old planter group and its supporters were devoid of political support, it recommended arrangements which were designed to strengthen their influence in the administration of the colony.⁹⁷ In its report the commission stated that one of the greatest impediments to development was the financial situation and that it was essential that the government should have power in the last resort to carry into effect measures which it considered essential. This was as much an attack on the elected representatives as it was a criticism of the constitutional arrangement in the colony. For

⁹⁷ Ibid., 12-14 and 85.

this purpose an alteration of the constitution would be necessary.⁹⁸ The Secretary of State accepted this recommendation and consequently directed that a local commission be appointed in 1927 to consider the steps to be taken to confer the necessary powers on the Governor. This commission reported in favour of changes which substantially reduced the influence of the elected representatives.⁹⁹

The local commission's recommendations were put into effect when, in 1928 by an Act of Parliament, it was enacted that it should be lawful for the His Majesty in Council to create and constitute, in substitution for the existing Legislature, a Legislature for the colony in such form and with such powers as His Majesty in Council might determine, and from time to time to alter and amend the constitution of the Legislature and any powers thereof.¹⁰⁰

As a consequence a new Legislature was brought into being on 18 July 1928. The Court of Policy and the Combined Court were abolished and their powers given to the new Legislative Council. It was composed of the Governor as President, of ten Official members and of five nominated unofficial members (composed almost entirely of representatives of European commercial and planting interests) and the fourteen elected members of the Court of

⁹⁸ Ibid., 14, 63.

⁹⁹ Amery to Governor Rodwell, 144, 25 May 1927 and The British Guiana Official Gazette, 12 July 1927.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 18 July 1928. p. 81.

Policy. Among the ex-officios members were the Colonial Secretary and Attorney General who together with the nominated members they outvoted the elected members as the preponderance shifted in favour of European economic interests.

Thus for the first time since 1803 there was an official majority. What was more, by transferring the preponderance to the nominated section, the influence of the conservative European element over the limited radicalism of the Popular Party was significantly strengthened. The constitution also provided that any measure requiring a vote of enactment of the Council might be decided by the Governor in Executive Council notwithstanding that such decision was contrary to the vote of the majority in the Legislative Council.¹⁰¹ These changes brought the colony in line with the modified Crown Colony system then prevalent throughout the British West Indies.

Whitehall was now firmly in control of the political machinery but it could not justify its rule if it was unable to maintain social stability, so, elected or not, it had to make concessions to popular forces. While the parliamentary commission was busy making arrangements to reverse the wheels of political progress in the colony by handing power back to an unpopular conservative section of the society, Critchlow and others were thinking of broadening the democratic base for the further isolation of that section. In 1929, in conjunction with the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA), the BGLU made representation to the

¹⁰¹ Clementi, 391-402.

Colonial Secretary for universal adult suffrage.¹⁰² This was a significant response to one of several aspects of the reports on the political situation in British Guiana released in the 1920s. A common feature of these reports was the reluctance to concede adult suffrage. Ormsby Gore was once moved to observe that if there was one thing the elected members seemed anxious to avoid, it was a further extension of the franchise.¹⁰³ But the Colonial Office was similarly inclined and for the time being the request was ignored.

The entire 1928 reform packet was opposed by all the liberals in the colony but particularly by the Popular Party, the BGEIA and the BGLU.¹⁰⁴ It constituted the major issue of the 1930 election campaign. However, since the Popular Party was aided by the deepening of the crisis and the sharpening of working class discontent, there were suggestions that they be returned unopposed.¹⁰⁵ While these suggestions did not find favour with political contenders waiting in the wings eight of the former representatives were returned unopposed and few of the others

¹⁰² "Report of a Meeting convened in the Town Hall, 30 June 1929" in The Daily Argosy, 1 July 1929.

¹⁰³ HCD., 1928, 214, col., 1878.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 1873. See also Address of the Elected Members, 3 July 1931 in Legislative Paper, No. 2/1931, First Session, 1930. MLC, 1930.

¹⁰⁵ The Daily Argosy, 9 September 1930.

were seriously challenged.¹⁰⁶ In the end there was only one change in the Legislative assembly.¹⁰⁷

This combination of middle class indignation and working people's militancy convinced the local administration of the unpopularity of the 1928 constitutional reforms and changes were introduced. Elected representation in the Executive Council was increased from two to three immediately after the election.¹⁰⁸ In 1931 a motion in the Legislative Council by A.R.F. Webber requesting a commission to enquire into the introduction of universal adult suffrage, an elected majority in the Legislative Council and greater representation in the Executive Council was defeated but it was obvious to all that the last word had not been heard on these issues.¹⁰⁹

The issue surfaced repeatedly in the succeeding years as the increasing hardship consequent upon the depression of the 1930s forced some liberals and trade unionists to see the franchise as a means of increasing the power of the liberals over the obstinate conservative element and regaining greater control over

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 12 September 1930.

¹⁰⁷ The Official Gazette, 25 October 1930 and The Daily Argosy, 17, 22, and 24 October 1930.

¹⁰⁸. Lord Passfield to Denham, (Confidential), No.2, 17 October 1930. See also Denham to Passfield, (Confidential), 7 November 1930 and Ibid., 12 April 1931. (NAG).

¹⁰⁹. MLC., 29 May 1931 and CO. 111/696, Douglas-Jones to Passfield, 3 July 1831.

the means of legislation and of effecting amelioration of the distressed conditions of the working people.¹¹⁰

In 1935, in preparation for the election, a Franchise commission was appointed but it refused to consider seriously the demand of the labour movement for universal adult suffrage.¹¹¹ This reluctance to enfranchise the working people embittered them against those in office but since they were unenfranchised they were helpless to affect the course of colonial politics in the conventional manner. Their restiveness, already a cause for concern within the colonial administration, was given a further boost by the commission's report.¹¹² The election itself did not create as much interests as the two previous ones.¹¹³ For one thing the working people disappointed by the failure of previous administrations and weighted down by economic difficulties were less prepared to trust middle class candidates. Additionally, the labour movement did not publicly endorse the candidates. Polling was low and the exercise was marred by allegations of fraud.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Francis Drakes, "The Development of Political Organisations and Political Consciousness in British Guiana, 1870-1964; The Conscientizacao of the Middle Class and the Masses." (Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1989). pp. 143-178.

¹¹¹ MLC, 1 September 1933; 12 April 1934 and 1 March 1935.

¹¹² British Guiana, Report of the British Guiana Franchise Commission, 1935 . Legislative Council, No. 4 of 1935.

¹¹³ The Daily Argosy, 3 and 4 September 1935.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 8 September 1935.

Colonial Revenue, Political Representation and Unrest in the 1930s

As we have seen, the 1927 Wilson Snell Report proved contentious and the elected representatives were not prepared to have the dispute put aside. They demanded a reformed system of taxation and more aid from HMG. Then in 1929 both Sugar and bauxite interests appealed against the introduction of a new system of taxation which, they argued, penalised the industries which were simultaneously affected by the depression. The tax was modelled on a draft introduced by the Colonial Office. The Governor was unimpressed with the local protest, but in the light of the Wilson Snell Report and the depression Whitehall was prepared to withdraw the tax. The Governor was supported by the elected representatives and his officials, who felt that in spite of the depression Sugar and bauxite should be encouraged to make good the fall in colonial revenue. To arrive at a proper understanding of the local circumstances and to defuse the situation the Secretary of State, Lord Passfield, in 1931, commissioned Messrs. W Gaskell and D S. MacGregor to investigate the financial situation in British Guiana.¹¹⁵

The commissioners were unimpressed with what they saw of the system of taxation in the colony. They noted that the bulk of the revenue was derived from Customs duties (ad valorem and specific) with only a comparatively small proportion (under six percent) collected on exports. They concluded, on the evidence

¹¹⁵ Great Britain, The Financial Position in British Guiana: A Report of a Commission Appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1931. (London: , 1931). Cmd., 3938. p. 4.

before them, that the duties were as a rule too high, which was one of the causes of local dissatisfaction.

They noted that the burden of the taxes fell on certain specified items such as machinery for industries other than Sugar, spirits, ale, beer, kerosene, and gasoline, flour, salted beef and pork, cheese, crude fabrics and other necessities of the labouring population and others. The very partial nature of the selection of items was likely to influence the general cost of living in the colonies and thus doubly affect the distressed condition of the common man.

In dealing with direct taxation the Commissioners noted that representations made to them were to the effect that the rates of income tax should not be increased because of the already high level of the Customs Duty. The Commissioners demurred. They noted that the parlous condition of the colony rendered unavoidable increased taxation of a direct nature. Among the several recommendations was one suggesting that a system resembling the one in operation in Great Britain and Ireland be adopted. They also advised the imposition of a super tax on incomes in excess of £2,500. They further recommended that pensions paid to non-residents from the revenues of the colony become the subject of local taxation.

The Commissioners observed that increased taxation was "distasteful" to the interests of Sugar, but this was unavoidable, and in the circumstances there should, as soon as

possible, be an increase in the land tax in the colony.¹¹⁶ The Colonial Office however did not consider the 1930s an opportune period during which to increase taxes on the local industries.

In 1939 the Moyne Commission pushed these ideas further when it supported recommendations that the local system of income tax rates should be brought into line with the system then in operation in the United Kingdom.¹¹⁷ The local Governor, Sir Wilfred Jackson, demurred, claiming that such a system would inevitably affect the European community and in the circumstances it was a bad step.¹¹⁸ Once again Whitehall postponed action on the matter.

In the years immediately after 1928, the attempt to levy new taxes represented a serious contradiction of policy in the colony, even though it represented, at the same time, a new development in British colonial policy which was supported by the elected representatives. Over the period 1911-1927, the Colonial Office had persistently defended the economy from colonial taxation, had accepted the description of new taxes as

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 18, para., 43.

¹¹⁷ Great Britain, Report of the West India Royal Commission, 1938, (London: 1939). Cmd, 6607. The Moyne Report 1939. 76.

¹¹⁸ Governor Jackson to Secretary of State, 17 April 1940. (Secret). NAG.

"stupid", and those who attempted to introduce them as irresponsible.¹¹⁹

Before 1922 the Colonial Office had consistently supported the notion that direct taxation was bad for the colonial economy. The 1927 Parliamentary Commission had warned that a taxed bauxite industry might be encouraged to relocate on the Gold Coast.¹²⁰ European investors in the local economy had every reason to believe that they had successfully caused the withdrawal of a liberal constitutional form in the colony by supporting and exploiting this Colonial Office thinking. They were therefore very indignant that so soon after the 1928 constitutional reform His Majesty's Government should have attempted to impose a system of direct taxation.

The reluctance to tax the colonial economy meant that the local revenue remained small and insufficient to fund local development. Simultaneously foreign investment had been prohibited in the colony for fear that the domestic jurisdiction of the Crown would be compromised, as it was threatened in Jamaica by American investment concerns.¹²¹ When liberal

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 51-52.

¹²⁰ Wilson-Snell Report, 1927, 12.

¹²¹. CO. 111/631, Viscount Milner to Governor Collett, 31 August 1920, (Confidential), expressed HMG fears as well as the rationale when he stated,

Whatever may be the advantages to a colony of obtaining the use of foreign capital, the result in certain cases may be that the interests so created attain a position which is entirely beyond the control of the colonial government.

politicians protested at this act, they were assured that funds for development would be forthcoming, but these funds were slow to materialise and the local development was correspondingly retarded.¹²² When some of the colonial legislators demanded a liberal constitution in the 1930s they were met with the same rebuffs. Financing colonial development required Crown control of the colonial administration and once again development did not materialise. It was not surprising therefore that frustration grew not only within the ranks of the working people but among the middle class representatives as well.

This was the bewildering state of affairs when the impoverished workers, impatient for change and development, again took the issues into the streets. Mass working class action had been threatening for some time; the 1930s like the 1920s witnessed the workers demanding economic and political reforms.¹²³ Sugar

Under pressure, HMG., would not relent.

HMG., should not be a party to handing
over the administration of even small
communities to companies whose primary
object is commercial development.

CO. 111/690, Passfield to Denham, (Confidential) 12 March 1931.
(NAG).

¹²² CO. 537/2245, Lethem to Stanley, 8 October 1943.
(Confidential).

¹²³ There are now several works which deal with the 1930s. Most are regional in nature, in that they focus on the Caribbean as a whole. Among the better known ones are, W H. Knowles, Trade Union Development and Industrial Relations in the British West Indies, (Berkeley: 1959) and W A. Lewis, Labour in the British West Indies, (London: 1977). Undoubtedly among the best of the territorial studies are, Ken Post, Arise Ye Starvings, (Nijhoff: 1978) and, Strike 'The Iron' A Colony at War, Jamaica: 1939-45 (New Jersey: 1982). See also Ashton Chase, The History of Trade Unionism.

workers struck with increasing intensity throughout the decade. The number of protesters increased with each protest. The years after 1937 saw them at their most militant. In 1936 the **Man Power Citizen Association** was formed under Ayube Edun, a middle class East Indian intellectual, to represent the disaffected sugar workers. Edun was very popular and before long the MPCA boasted a membership in excess of 20,000 whom he persistently led in protest against the hardships of the 1930s.¹²⁴ In the urban centres waterfront workers, postal service workers, nurses, transport workers and the police took strike action. In 1937 alone there were sixty eight stoppages for periods longer than two weeks. Many of these incidents deteriorated into riotous behaviour necessitating the intervention of the police and the magistracy and on six occasions the colonial administration was forced to proclaim various locations in the colony. In 1939, during the presence of the Moyne Commission in the colony, the workers on the West Coast of Demerara staged their most successful strike. The authorities called out the police and once again a number of workers, this time four, were murdered.

The protests of the 1930s were the culmination of popular disaffection on several counts. It is of interest to note that it was a movement which affected nearly every British West Indian colony and that the demands in every instance bore striking

¹²⁴ Chase, 85-90.

resemblance to each other.¹²⁵ The response of His Majesty's Government was predictable. Lord Moyne, like others in the 1920s, was commissioned to investigate and report. His report, by far the most serious attempt to understand the process of underdevelopment and discontent in the Anglophone Caribbean since the 1897 Norman Commission, refuted the misconceptions of Wood and others of like mind.¹²⁶ It was more progressive than Colonial Office thinking, which was not surprising, and created considerable unease within the British administrative class.¹²⁷

Moyne rejected the basis on which the notion of a laissez faire tradition was based and advocated, very strongly, Imperial assistance which he criticised for being so long promised and so long denied.¹²⁸ Like the Norman Commission, at the end of the nineteenth century, Moyne pleaded the case for economic diversification, provision of accessible credit facilities, the adoption of the committee system of pseudo-political administration which encouraged training, experience and expertise in the practical work of government, the reduction of the franchise and representative qualifications and made one of

¹²⁵ W H. Knowles, Trade Union Development... pp. 5-68. See also, Great Britain, Report of Major J St. J. Orde Brown on Labour Conditions in the West Indies, (London: 1939) Cmd, 6070. pp. 18-43, paras., 26-112.

¹²⁶ The Moyne Report 1939. Cmd, 6607.

¹²⁷. Margery Perham, Colonial Reckoning, (London 1963). p. 31 and Harold Mitchell, Europe in the Caribbean, (London 1963). p. 35.

¹²⁸ The Moyne Report 1939, 373-376.

the strongest appeals ever for universal adult suffrage. To cap them all, he insisted that the time had long passed when a more representative type of government could be denied West Indian peoples.

Consequences of the Moyne Commission Report

The Moyne Commission Report possessed profound socio-economic, constitutional and political implications for the developing relations between the Colonial Office and the colonies and indeed for the subsequent anti-colonial struggles in the Caribbean. In the case of Guiana, it established the most extensive agenda so far for agitation in favour of wide-ranging and far-reaching political and economic change. This was not to discredit or undervalue either what had taken place since the 1920s or, indeed, the ongoing unrest and protest within the colonial state. The Report added a new dimension and an irrebuttable legitimacy, urgency and relevance which neither the colonial administration nor His Majesty's Government could ignore for much longer. Colonial development in the West Indies and British Guiana could not be postponed: it had to be undertaken immediately.

The Report cleared the way for the introduction of universal adult suffrage.¹²⁹ It seemed, however that this was perhaps the easiest concession to make, and indeed the speed with which the Crown acceded to this demand created suspicions of the authenticity of British intentions which were not altogether

¹²⁹ Ibid., 1941. Cmd. 6607. p. 450 and Vincent Harlow, "British Guiana and British Colonial Policy, 1951-1952" United Empire, XLII, 1952. 305.

unfounded. It was indeed ironic therefore that it was the colonial assemblies which thereafter voted for a measured introduction of adult suffrage, thus further frustrating the working peoples of the region. But their actions only postponed what had become the inevitable. By their actions they exposed, in an undisguised form, the local enemies of the forces of democracy.

Finally, in clearing the way for the introduction of adult suffrage, the Commission helped to create the necessary conditions for popular politics and the establishment of mass-based political parties which were to become the main vehicles for challenging both the authoritarian crown colony system of government and ultimately the legitimacy of colonial rule in Guiana.

Such was the severity of the critical comments in the report that His Majesty's Government considered it imprudent to release it during the course of the war for fear of inciting further unrest.¹³⁰ Meanwhile HMG gained time to set in train at least a limited series of reforms.¹³¹ As part of the general response

¹³⁰ The Report was submitted to the King on 21 December 1939 but fearing for the political and other repercussions in the region if the contents were released during the war, the full text of the Report was not published until July 1945. The main recommendations were however presented to Parliament on February 1940.HCD.

¹³¹ Great Britain, Statement of Action taken on Recommendations of the West Indian Royal Commission. (London: 1940). Cmd., 6656. p.93; Circular Despatch, Secretary of State to West Indian Governors, 14 March 1945 in Nicholas Mansergh, Documents and Speeches on Colonial Affairs, 1931-1952, II. (London: 1953). 1223.

to the Report the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 was rushed through parliament with enough fanfare to suggest that Colonial Development and Welfare were at last priority concerns.¹³²

With the mechanics of the Fund left to the Regional Secretariat HMG decided to effect some constitutional modifications in the colony. Under the British Guiana (Constitution) (Amendment) Order-in-Council made on the 11 March 1943, official representation on the Legislative Council was confined to the Governor, as President, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General, the Colonial Treasurer; nominated membership was increased from five to seven while the elected membership remained at fourteen. Thus for the first time since 1926 the elected representatives were in the majority in the Legislative Council; this did not of course give the elected members any decisive power because the Governor was given extensive reserve powers to pass essential legislation. An elected member became Vice-President and took the Chair in the absence of the Governor. With the change in the constitution the official membership of the Executive Council was reduced to four, the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General and the Colonial

¹³² Stephen Constantine, The Making of British Colonial development Policy, 1914-1940 (London: 1984), 164-266 and George C. Abbott, "British Colonial Aid Policy During the Nineteen Thirties" Canadian Journal of History, V, 1, March 1970.

Treasurer and the non-official membership was increased to five.¹³³

Simultaneously Legislative Advisory Committees were established in relation to agriculture with fisheries, education and public works. The Chairman of each committee was a non-official member of the Executive Council. Membership of each committee provided for four or five members of the Legislative Council and the Head of the Department concerned.¹³⁴

These semi-official organs provided the Governor and his officials with the opportunity to explain colonial issues to the elected representatives in an informal and cordial environment. The Governor was able to sound out the representatives on various issues, solicit their opinions and even win their support on a number of important matters.¹³⁵ This form of informal interaction greatly enhanced the effectiveness of government business.¹³⁶ It accelerated the vote on the estimates and on subsequent supplementary estimates. It also aided the processing of legislation and in a variety of other ways made the conduct of legislative business much easier in the colony.¹³⁷

¹³³ MEC., 21 July 1942 and 25 August 1942 when he first draft was considered. See also, CO. 537/2245, Lethem to Stanley, 8 March 1943. (confidential).

¹³⁴ CO. 537/2245, Lethem to Stanley, 7 July 1943. (Confidential).

¹³⁵ Ibid., Lethem to Lord Stanley, 8 March 1945.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Lethem to De Aguiar, enclosed in Lethem to Stanley, 30 December 1943.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

In spite of the honourable intentions of HMG the weakness of these organs was that they seemed never to engage with the really critical issues of the colonial relationship. Firmly rooted in the day to day activities of government departments, important as these were, the Committees and their members neglected the opportunity to advance their understanding of the critical issues informing local politics.

In a further response to the Moyne Commission recommendations, a local Franchise Commission had been set up in 1941 which eventually reported in 1944. In its recommendations the Commission was timorous about adult suffrage but could not deny the need for a substantial extension of the franchise.¹³⁸

The colonial administration attributed the delay in reporting to the volume of representation made to the commission, the contentious nature of many delegations, the preparation of a minority report, the contentious nature of the legislative and public debate to which the report was subjected before local ratification, and divisions within the Colonial Office itself. Locally it was widely held that the commissioners deliberately prolonged the exercise with the hope that the election would have been held before its implementation.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ British Guiana, Report of the Franchise Commission 1941, Legislative Council paper, No. 10/1944.

¹³⁹ CO. 111/779, Lethem to Secretary of State, No. 554, 21 July 1944; OAG to Secretary of State, No. 636, 17 August 1944; Comments by Lethem in London, 31 August 1944; Lethem to Secretary of State, No. 672, 14 August 1945; Colonial Office note P Rogers, 20 August 1945 and Secretary of State to Lethem, No. 408, 31

The recommendations of the Franchise Commission opened membership of the Assembly to women; removed the previous disqualification of ministers of religion who possessed the other qualifications required; and reduced the financial qualification for membership of the Legislative Council from possession of \$2,400 (BG) a year to income of at least \$1,200 a year, possession of property to the value of \$5,000 from \$10,000 or over and the holding of a lease from an annual value of \$1,200 to no less than \$300.¹⁴⁰

A literacy test in English was required for membership of the Legislative Council and any person before becoming eligible for election to the Legislative Council had to have resided continuously in the colony for a period of at least two years before nomination day. The Commission lowered the qualifications for voter registration. The condition governing the ownership, occupation or tenancy of land was reduced from six to three acres: the occupation of land to the value of \$350 to \$150; occupation or tenancy of property of rental of \$96 a year was reduced to \$48 and the possession of income of \$300 lowered to \$120 a year. Every elector was required to pass a literacy test in English instead of in the preferred language as in past years.¹⁴¹ The reductions would have effectively enfranchised a

August 1945

¹⁴⁰ Legislative Council (Elections) Ordinance No. 13 of 1943.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.; As a consequence of much criticism the Secretary of State for the Colonies rejected this recommendation reverting to the 1928 practice which provided that "no person shall be entitled to register as a voter if he cannot read and write some language". CO. 111/779, Secretary of State to Lethem, No. 408, 31 August 1945.

considerable proportion of the working population, a considerable proportion of whom were East Indians. But the literacy test inhibited the access of the East Indian who had always exhibited a marked preference for Indian languages. It was therefore with considerable acrimony that nationalist politicians attacked the literacy test in English as a deliberate attempt to continue the exclusion of the East Indians from the political process.

Sympathetic consideration was to be given to the adoption of adult suffrage in five years' time from the election of the new Legislative Council, provided that experience during those five years of the working of the constitution with the extended franchise proved satisfactory, and the recommendation for the adoption of adult suffrage was made either by the Legislative Council or by any representative *ad hoc* body appointed by Government.¹⁴² The appropriate legislation was passed in 1945.¹⁴³

The eventual publication of the Moyne Commission Report in that same year coincided with the conclusion of hostilities in Europe and as a result when the nationalist movements everywhere for colonial emancipation gained considerable impetus. The Report provided the colonial politicians with important material from which to launch their attack against the colonial system. They were angered in the first instance at the delay in releasing the

¹⁴² CO. 111/779, Lethem to Secretary of State, No. 34, 4 March 1944.

¹⁴³ Legislative Council (Elections) Ordinance No. 13 of 1945.

Moyne Report and then at the slow pace at which reforms were being implemented.

Local criticism was the stronger because the colonial assembly which as we have seen had been in office since 1935 and had become steadily distanced from the real concerns of the working people. The delay in the presentation of the franchise report and the commissioner's reluctance to concede universal suffrage were perceived as attempts to prolong the life of the "long parliament" and to increase the chances of its incumbents at the next election.

As a consequence of events in the 1930s and the early years of the 1940s there was a continuing restiveness abroad in the colony. At the same time and because of these developments the population had entered into a new state of social and political awakening. This is not to suggest a sudden evolution of social awareness or the appearance of a new political consciousness.¹⁴⁴ Different groups, at different times had individually or collectively challenged the socio-economic and political formation in British Guiana. They had articulated, sensitised and mobilised support within their ranks and across social

¹⁴⁴ Drakes, "The Development of Political Consciousness..." This point cannot be overemphasised. Too often, even among Colonial Office Officials, one gets the impression that colonial disaffection arose in 1953 and was the devilment of a group of young communists. It is important to demonstrate that colonial dissonance was a part of the ongoing antagonisms within the colonial state, manifested in a variety of forms for some time past.

boundaries to effect changes in the social system and the body politic.

Both prior to 1918, and between the wars, the quest for change had involved a moderate demand for constitutional reforms and economic development. After 1935 these demands not only became more radical and urgent they also came from a wider cross section of the population. The combination of interest in, and enthusiasm for change of a profound nature, ignored the long entrenched barriers of ethnicity, reflecting a new consciousness of the disaffected Guianese in opposition to expatriate interests and Imperial impositions. Conservative middle class politicians and their leaders were accused of being in alliance with expatriate and Imperial interests.

There were demands from liberals, trade unionists and a small group of nationalists for the nationalisation of foreign interests, tax reforms, land preparation and redistribution, universal adult suffrage, economic development and interior development, social welfare and self-government. These demands emphasised a reversal of the trend of exploitation and appropriation in favour of colonial development and greater self-determination.

The popularity of the anti-colonial platform derived from the depressed conditions in which the bulk of the population existed. It drew its popular appeal from a clear understanding of the

connection between the impoverishment of the environment and the oppression of the people and their status as colonials.

The survival of the colonial state, in its old form, was being questioned.

CHAPTER TWO

NATIONALIST POLITICS AND THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL MOBILISATION, 1945-1951.

Introduction

After 1945 the constitutional and political struggle, was in the first place, aimed at ensuring a greater measure of democracy and the rapid attainment of internal self government. This struggle had begun at a much earlier date but now entered into a more critical stage becoming more urgent and more militant. Before this stage the elected representatives within the colonial state were prepared to accept their colonial status in return for a certain measure of constitutional and political flexibility and a greater degree of economic development. After 1945 nationalist politicians demanded internal self government followed by complete political freedom.

Colonial demands coalesced around a number of issues: the need to have elected representatives enjoy a greater degree of authority in the Legislative Council and representation in the Executive Council, the urgent desire to have liberal franchise and representative qualifications, and a speedy passage to self government. These concerns were perceived as the prerequisite to attaining the fourth concern, economic development.

At the core of the first was the vexed question of the nominated unofficial, while at the heart of the second were the contentious

issues of universal adult suffrage and the property qualification. Complete political emancipation was the essence of the third while the fourth derived its prominence from the structural malformation of the colonial economy, the growing spectre of unemployment and underemployment, the increasing impoverishment of the working people and the slow pace of colonial development.

It its attack on the constitution dissenting opinion exploited the 1939 Royal Commission Report which recommended the introduction of more representative organs.¹ The 1943-45 reforms were significant steps in the desired direction but the nationalist consensus was that they had not gone far enough. There was considerable disquiet about the failure of the Franchise Commission to recommend the immediate adoption of universal suffrage. Because of wartime extensions the life of the Legislature as constituted after the 1935 election was extended and there was a clamour for a general election immediately after the war. But since the last census had been in 1931 and in view of the 1944 Franchise Commission Report and the growth in population, the electoral roll was considered out of date. Taking all the factors into consideration, the colonial administration decided to hold elections in 1947.²

¹ The Moyne Commission Report 1939, p. 450.

² CO. 111/779, Secretary of State for the colonies to Lethem, No. 408, 31 August 1945, enclosed British Guiana Legislative Constitution, British Guiana Constitution Amendment Order-in-Council, 1945

This chapter will address the further mobilisation and politicization of the Guianese people and the evolution of the first mass based political party, the **People's Progressive Party**. Attention will be focused on the various issues which concerned the PPP, its political advocacy and the responses of the local conservatives, the colonial administration and Whitehall to the Guianese demands which the party articulated.

Political Mobilisation for the 1947 Election

Two political parties contested the elections scheduled for 24 November 1947. The first was the **British Guiana Labour Party**, under two medical practitioners Drs J.B.Singh and J.A.Nicholson and the trade union leaders, Critchlow and Chase.³

The Party was formed in June 1946 primarily to contest the election. Exploiting the trade union credentials of a few of its leaders, it claimed to represent the working people. The Party was, at best, a broad and fragile coalition of forces professing opposition to both British colonial policy in the colony and the former upper middle class and liberal conservatives who served in the legislature during the past years.⁴

³ CO. 111/799, Political Situation Reports, No. 31 and 32 November 1947; "The Report on the 1947 Election" in 844B. 00/12-2947, George W.Skora, (American Vice-Consul, British Guiana) to The State Department, (Washington) No. 76, 29 December 1947.

⁴ Ralph Premdas, "The Rise of The First Mass-based Racial-Ethnic Political Party in Guyana," *CQ*, XX, 4, 1974. 11, and Francis Drakes, "The Organisation and Mobilization of the Original PPP," Paper Presented at the Sixteenth Annual Conference of Caribbean Historians, Barbados, 1984, pp. 9-10.

Those Conservative politicians had over the period 1935-1947 consistently criticised HMG's policy of benign neglect and constitutional gradualism.⁵ They had nevertheless alienated popular sympathy by failing not so much to demand development but to persuade HMG to initiate development.⁶ Their reluctance to engage in confrontational politics persuaded the increasing working class electorate of their inability to challenge British colonialism.⁷ This perception was reinforced by popular awareness of conservative fears of, and opposition to universal adult suffrage. It was this failure, more than any other, which alienated the respect and sympathy of the progressives and the working people. The old brigade, as they had come to be regarded, was therefore deprived of a platform and a constituency.

In its manifesto, the Party advocated immediate changes in the constitution of the colony to provide for twenty four members elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage, the abolition of the nominated seats and the attainment of full self-government within a minimum period of five years.⁸ It supported a programme

⁵ Jagan, The West On Trial, 71 -72 and H.A. Lutchman, Constitutional Development during the Second World War, (Georgetown: 1972), p. 25.

⁶ Drakes, "The Development of Political Organisation..." 143-152.

⁷ Premdas, 2-3.

⁸ PPP, "Our Position is Clear," Political Pamphlet, Georgetown: 1953; CO. 111/799, Political Situation Reports, No. 31 and 32 November 1947 and The Report on the 1947 Election, 844B 00/12-2947, Skora, to The State Department, No. 76, 29 December 1947.

of land preparation and the immediate distribution of available lands to the landless. Drainage and irrigation, an aggressive house building programme, potable water extension schemes and an improved health service with special provisions for the rural poor were among the chief concerns.

The Party advocated the development of minor industries, full employment for all, social security for the unemployed and the underemployed and wage increases for all categories of workers. The Labourites spoke of the nationalisation of industries and public utilities, a fifty one percent reinvestment of profits by foreign companies operating in the colony and a special levy on companies producing primary products only.

The second party contesting the election, **The Manpower Citizen's Association Party** was formed in February 1947.⁹ Named after the sugar union from which it drew its leadership, and depending primarily on the support of the sugar workers it represented, this Party also claimed to represent the working people.

It supported the nationalisation of the key industries, the expansion and improvement of the transportation and communication systems in the colony and the Governor's development initiatives, especially those of drainage, irrigation and land settlement.

The Party promised reasonable inducements to industry for the development of agriculture, timber, mineral and other resources of both the interior and the coastland and opposed the implied

⁹ Ibid.

threat from administrative circles, both local and imperial, to partition the colony separating the coast from the interior.

The MPCA Party pledged to struggle for full self-government by 1951 on the basis of thirty six elected seats, and a single chamber legislature. It therefore opposed the idea, which was beginning to be discussed, of a West Indian federation, unless self-government for the unit territories was first introduced.

The similarities in the political and legislative ambitions of both parties was a notable feature of the election campaign. The electoral promises, though liberal in the extreme, retained both cogency and urgency because the slow pace of constitutional and economic development in the colony had produced a population impatient for meaningful reforms and intolerant of those not committed to rapid change. Of greater significance was the fact that there were two labour parties contesting the elections. This indicated a division within the labour movement and the isolation of the MPCA, a very significant factor to be discussed later in this chapter.

There was a small group of political activists, not represented by either of these political parties.¹⁰ This group had its

¹⁰ Jagan, The West On Trial, 65-68 and Leo Despres, Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana (Chicago: 1967), pp. 178-189.

origin in the interventionist politics of Cheddi Jagan.¹¹ Jagan had studied dentistry in the United States of America where he had become politicised. On his return to Guiana he attempted to join the anti-colonial political movement represented by middle class liberal politicians but was repulsed by what he later described as the uncaring selfishness of the political moguls dominating the political landscape.¹²

He joined the middle class in public debates on the deformed conditions within the colonial state. The series of monthly discussions sponsored by the Public Free Library attempted to explore the source, nature and consequence of colonial dissatisfaction and to formulate effective solutions to pressing colonial problems. These discussions originally begun in 1944 as a middle class forum to discuss the Franchise Report were continued as a way of discussing current socio-economic and political issues. The group was strongly influenced by a core of conservative personalities and was reluctant to admit liberal points of view.¹³

Jagan attracted the disfavour of the colonial administration, British authorities and the American intelligence service when

¹¹ Premdas, 6-7; Drakes, "The Organisation and Mobilisation of the Original PPP," pp. 9-10 and Jagan also reveals much about his early career in his The West on Trial, particularly, pp. 11-68.

¹² Department of History, University of Guyana, Oral History Project, Interview with Dr Cheddi Jagan, 14 May 1987.

¹³ Department of History, University of Guyana, Oral History Project, Interview with Martin Carter, poet and founder member of the Political Affairs Committee, 12-13 November 1988.

he attempted to explain the relationship between colonial underdevelopment and colonialism and between European colonialism and international capitalism.¹⁴ The colonial authorities were disturbed by the robust nature of his analysis and public forums were closed to him while invitations to participate in speaking engagements were withheld.¹⁵

The focus of his attacks and the nature of his arguments disconcerted many of the local establishment but attracted a band of young intellectuals and political activists; he became the leader of an informal group of young nationalists obsessed with discovering the solution to the many problems which affected the colony.

Jagan benefited from the exposure and contacts which the Public Free Library discussion group afforded. It was here that he met such middle class liberals as the Gaskin sisters, Winifred and Thelma, and Frances Stafford, who along with Janet Jagan, wife of Cheddi, subsequently formed the Women's Political and Economic Organisation (WPEO) in 1946.¹⁶ It was also at these discussions that he cemented relations with trade unionists, Ashton Chase and H.J.M. Hubbard, and the Anglican clergyman and radical thinker, Canon Worlledge. According to Jagan they exercised a profound

¹⁴ Interview with Dr Jagan, 14 May 1987.

¹⁵ Ibid. See also Drakes, "The Organisation and Mobilisation," pp. 10 and Premdas, 8.

¹⁶ Roberta Walker Kilkenny, "The Radicalisation of the Woman's Movement in British Guiana, 1946-1953." Cimarron, I, III, 1988. 16-22.

influence on his political socialisation.¹⁷

When the urban centres were closed to him, Jagan sought groundings elsewhere and in the process moved closer to the working people. Having been deprived of a public forum to ventilate his ideas, Jagan gravitated to other organisations providing a forum for dialogue and political action. He became the treasurer of the MPCA but was distressed by the unethical concubinage between the SPA and elements of the union's leadership.¹⁸ He tried the LCP and the BGEIA but here he encountered the reaction of middle class racism.¹⁹

In the years following his return to the colony in 1944 Jagan encountered a lack of basic commitment in several organisations around the colony. He discovered a transparent dishonesty among the leadership which divided the Guianese people into competing sections of race, class and region. This tendency to competing particularism in the face of social and economic retrogression forced Jagan to consider an organisation committed to the honest articulation of the real problems of the Guianese people.²⁰ This resulted in the formation of the **Political Affairs Committee**

¹⁷ Interview with Dr Jagan, 14 May 1987.

¹⁸ See the evidence of Amos Rangela before the Enmore Commission of Enquiry reported in The Daily Argosy, 31 July 1948; Rose, The 1948 Enmore Incident, pp. 17-18.

¹⁹ Drakes "The Organisation and Mobilisation," 10; and Jagan, The West on Trial, 60.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 63.

(PAC) in 1946.²¹

The PAC took its inspiration from the **Workers Study Circle Committee (WSCC)** which had been formed in September 1944 to alert the Guianese working people to the real issues underlying the vote against adult suffrage.²² Jagan was apparently impressed with the cause and commitment espoused by that fledgling body and his new organisation committed itself to a similar policy of advancing the political literacy of working people.²³

The PAC adopted a much broader mandate than did the earlier WSCC. In its aims and objectives it undertook to assist in the growth of the labour and progressive movements in the colony and to establish, eventually, a strong, disciplined and enlightened Party, equipped with a theory of "Scientific Socialism". To this end the PAC would provide information and present political analysis on current affairs, both local and international and foster discussion groups, through the circulation of bulletins, booklets and other printed matter.²⁴

²¹ Janet Jagan, History of the People's Progressive Party, (Georgetown: 1963). p. 3. This book was first published in 1961 as Twelve Years of the People's Progressive Party. See also, The PAC Bulletin, No. 1, 6 November 1946.

²² Peter Simms, Trouble in Guyana: An Account of the People, Personalities and Politics as they were in British Guiana, (London: 1966), p. 75; Drakes, "The Development of Political Organisations" 202. See also The Sunday Chronicle, 11 February 1945 and 22 April 1945 as well as The Daily Chronicle, 21 February and 27 June 1945 and The Daily Argosy, 13 July 1945.

²³ Interview with Dr. Cheddi Jagan, 14 May 1987.

²⁴ "The Aims of The PAC," PAC Bulletin, No. 1, 6 November 1946.

The leadership of the PAC, like its functions, had a significant bearing on HMG's perception and response to it. Foremost were the Jagans, Cheddi and his American wife, Janet, a former militant student nurse. Because of her campus activities American intelligence categorised her as a communist.²⁵ There were trade unionists Ashton Chase and H.J.M. Hubbard who were prominent alongside the Jagans in the PAC. Chase was the assistant secretary of the BGLU, the oldest trade union in Guiana. The union's main support came from Black urban dock workers but it possessed a large multi-racial rural following. The rural adherents derived from the high esteem in which H.N. Critchlow was held in the early years, particularly between 1919 and 1939 when rural workers were still unorganised. During this stage of the working people's struggle, every worker felt himself a member of the BGLU and the rural worker, particularly East Indian, in a singular show of admiration and respect, rechristened Critchlow, the "Black Crosby".²⁶

Hubbard was the general secretary of the Trade Union Council, the umbrella trade union organisation in Guiana. Both Chase and Hubbard shared a working relationship with Caribbean trade unionists out of which had developed an appreciation of the inner wretchedness of British colonialism and the regional nature of

²⁵ Department of History, University of Guyana, Oral History project. Interview with Janet Jagan, 22 August 1988 and 741D.00/12-950, T.E. Burke (American Vice Consul), Georgetown to Department of State, 31, 10 February 1950.

²⁶ Hazel Woolford, The History of The British Guiana Labour Union (Unpublished manuscript, University of Guyana Library, 1989). pp. 44-65 and C.V.Alert, The Life and Work of Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow (Georgetown: 1949).

Caribbean underdevelopment. The PAC therefore, from its inception, had a militant working class constituency in Guiana and fraternal relations in the Caribbean with men whom the Colonial Office mildly referred to as irresponsible.²⁷

The PAC, while not deliberately divorcing itself from the urban middle class dialogue, undertook the organisation and political education of the Guianese working people. It established political discussion groups throughout the colony but was best organised and strongest on the east coast of Demerara, a densely populated area extending for about thirty miles east of Georgetown, the capital city.²⁸ The area, though dominated by the sugar industry, contained a number of agricultural villages in which rural peasants nursed their grievances. The population was an almost balanced mix of East Indians and Blacks.

The problem posed for the British by the PAC in the zealous pursuit of its goals derived not so much from its work among the Blacks in the villages, as among the exploited sugar workers, particularly the field worker. The Colonial Office equated sugar workers with East Indians and entertained a strong belief that East Indians were illiterate and volatile and that they could be incited to create public mischief.²⁹ The irony was that in the

²⁷ CO. 111/791, Colonial Office Memorandum, 9 November 1948; Chase, 123-124; Interview with Dr Jagan, 14 May 1987 and Jagan, The West On Trial, 63.

²⁸ Drakes, "The Political Organisation and Mobilization," 6-10 and Premdas, 14.

²⁹ CO. 111/797, Colonial Office Memorandum by Ian Watt, 21 April 1949.

nineteenth century East Indians were depicted as docile, tending to absorb the brutality of the system with little rebelliousness.³⁰ In the twentieth century the stereotyping continued but the East Indian was now caricatured as unlettered, gullible and very violent. Since these mythical notions served the purpose of the colonial administration little effort was made to dispel them and since they were always irrelevant to the consciousness of the East Indian, they were seldom challenged.³¹

The attempt to mobilise the sugar workers and raise their consciousness raised the ire of the SPA which was convinced that a docile, illiterate work force was the best recipe for stable industrial relations.³² The activities of the PAC were brought to the attention of the Governor, discussed at the Executive Council and duly reported to the Colonial Office.³³

The second concern derived from the nature of the organisation's programme. The PAC's programme brought Blacks and East Indians together as a unified constituency to explore the plight of the colony, to examine how similar problems were resolved in various

³⁰ Pulander Kandhi, " East Indian Insurgency on the Sugar Estates of British Guiana: 1869-1913," History Gazette, 8, 1989.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Tyran Ramnarine, "Over A Hundred Years of East Indian Disturbances on the Sugar Estates of British Guiana, 1869-1978; A Historical Overview," D. Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, (eds.), India in the Caribbean (London: 1987). pp. 120-29.

³³ MEC, 14 June 1947 and 12 July 1947; CO. 537/3824, A.H. Poyntin to E.E. Sabben Clare, 15 June 1948 and G.F. Seel to Sir John Shaw (n.d) 1948 and Interview with Dr Jagan, 14 May 1987.

parts of the colonial world and to isolate some of these experiences as starting points and founding principles for collective action in Guiana.³⁴

Since 1944, local Governors and the Colonial Office, had been awakened to the issue of racial politics in Guiana and the damaging implications this development harboured for the ongoing evolution of the colony.³⁵ They made profuse statements to this end, but in reality, while they feared for the damaging fallouts of uncontrolled ethnic rivalry, they welcomed the existence of ethnic polarisation and were quite prepared to foster and make capital out of it. Controlled ethnic rivalry was an administrative asset in a colonial state. It was institutionalised in the body politic and by 1945, occupational preferences, residential patterns and social and recreational pursuits reflected ethnic specialisation.³⁶

The activities of the PAC ran counter to this policy and as such presented a direct challenge to the efforts of the colonial

³⁴ Interview with Cheddi Jagan, 14 May 1987; Janet Jagan, Twelve Years..., p. 3.

³⁵ CO. 111/779, Lethem to Secretary of State, No. 534, 21 July 1944 and No. 539, 25 July 1944; OAG to Secretary of State, No. 604, 3 August 1944; Daniel Debidin to Secretary of State, 28 July 1944; BGEIA to Lethem, 31 August 1944 and MLC, 6, 7, and 11 August 1944. For the American comments on this development, See 844B.00/6-2444, Carlton Hurst, American Consul, British Guiana to The Honorable Secretary of State, Washington, No. 326, 24 June 1944, (Restricted) and 844B. 00/10-1644, Albert A Rabida, American Vice-Consul to The Honorable Secretary of State, No. 395, 16 October 1944.

³⁶ Despres, 68-120.

administration to maintain racial separation in British Guiana. They were therefore concerned that Jagan should be holding political literacy classes in Buxton, a Black village on the east coast with a militant tradition.³⁷ It was politically dangerous that Blacks could be led by an East Indian, or, that East Indians and Blacks could be cooperating harmoniously on the same issues, in the same place, at the same time under East Indian leadership.³⁸ The challenge was in the activity of the PAC which could so openly canvass racial unity and in the difficulties this posed for the colonial administration, which in spite of its preferences, could not be seen to be opposing this practice.

But while the Colonial Office could, in the circumstances, be forced to adopt a cautious policy, the SPA felt obliged to exert pressure on the security forces which adopted a programme of covert surveillance, intimidation and harassment to frustrate the activities of the PAC.³⁹ The SPA threatened working people identified with the activities of the PAC, issued trespass notices and in other ways tried to make the life of the PAC

³⁷ CO. 537/4880, Minutes of a Meeting held in the Colonial Office on 28 October 1948. Those present were Woolley, H.Baker, G.Seel, W.Logan, J Markham, Marstin, Southgate and Smallman; and CO. 111/796, Woolley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 22 July 1949.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ CO. 111/796, Ian Watt to W L.Heape 4 November 1949; Woolley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 September 1948, Ibid., 27 April 1950 and W O. Johnson to Colonial Office, 11 April 1950.

membership as difficult as possible.⁴⁰

The first PAC Bulletin was issued on 6 November 1946. The Bulletin ran for forty three issues and only expired when the PAC was transformed into the PPP. At this point the Bulletin became the Thunder. From its first issue both the SPA and the Colonial Office became obsessed with the idea of proving that the Bulletin was seditious. In subsequent years the Legal Department scoured every conceivable Act and Ordinance to discover an appropriate clause under which the news-sheet could be placed before the courts.⁴¹ The practice of close surveillance, reporting of speeches, monitoring of movements and the dissemination of unfavourable information, within as well as without, the colonial state, became a special requirement of Colonial Office reportage.⁴²

⁴⁰ SPA delegation led by Seaford and Eccles express this great concern to the colonial Governor. See CO.111/791, Woolley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 363, 9 August 1948 and Minutes of a meeting between the same SPA representatives and officers of the Colonial Office in London, 13 October 1948.

⁴¹ CO. 111/796, to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 September 1948 (Most Secret), Watt to Heape, 4 November 1949 and Secretary of State to Woolley, No. 8 17 September 1948, when the Secretary of State reminded the that Guiana was not a police state and hence there could be no arbitrary arrests of PAC activists for unfounded acts of sedition. See also a discussion of this matter in the House of Commons in HCD., 8 January 1949.

⁴² As a consequence of intense UN pressure HMG agreed to submit Political Reports to that body. In an effort to facilitate the preparation of these reports, colonial governors were required to submit monthly political reports to the Colonial Office for submission to the Foreign Office. The first Report on the Political Situation in Guiana was forwarded on 13 September 1948. See CO. 537/ 3782, Woolley to Secretary of State, 13 September 1948. (Secret).

The negative perception of the Jagans was strengthened by the activities of the WPEO, of which Janet Jagan was a founding member and secretary.⁴³ Essentially urban based, it organised among the disadvantaged urban and rural folk irrespective of ethnicity. Its programme attempted to get women to adopt a more organised and interventionist approach to the solution of their many pressing problems.

The fact that once again the integrated approach to political mobilisation and political education was being pursued stirred deep seated fears within the colonial administration.⁴⁴ Another of their really disturbing concerns was that the leadership of this group was composed of some of the most respected and well educated young ladies of the capital city. Efforts to move against them in the accustomed manner of dealing with colonial malcontents was bound to create grave unpleasantness for the colonial administration.⁴⁵ So, even though the group expanded both its activities and its membership, the colonial authorities chose to observe from a safe distance.⁴⁶

It is important to bear in mind that the 1947 election was the first in the colony for twelve years and as a result, local

⁴³ CO. 537/3782, Woolley to Secretary of State, 13 September 1948 and Kilkenny, "Radicalisation of Woman's Organisation...", 16-21.

⁴⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 15 August 1946.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 18, 19, and 20 August 1946.

⁴⁶ Governor to Colonial Secretary, 15 May 1947, F.J.Seaford to Colonial Secretary, 16 May 1947 and Colonial Secretary to F.J Seaford, 17 May 1947. NAG.

interest was very high. The furore over the 1944 Report of the Franchise Commission also contributed to the heightened interest, but undoubtedly the most significant factor was the activities of the PAC and WPEO.

As a consequence of the further liberalisation of the franchise qualifications the electorate grew from twenty nine thousand in 1935 to 59,193 in 1947.⁴⁷ The majority of voters were wage/ *the new* earners. There were, in the fourteen constituencies, forty eight candidates of whom thirty one were independents, contesting fourteen seats. The large number of independents illustrated the embryonic stage of party politics in the colony. The measure of each candidate was his ability to represent himself as a respectable colonist capable of influencing the colonial administration in the interest of his constituency. His ability to articulate policy was subordinate to his ability to persuade the colonial administration of the primacy of the interest of his constituency. Additionally, the constitution did not provide for group representation or the formation of a government and there was therefore no compelling reason to organise at the level of the group. Further, the narrow franchise so delimited the electorate that personal contact was the preferred approach to electoral campaigning. Finally since the electorate was small and tending to belong to the same social group there was little need for the elaborate machinery represented in the political

⁴⁷ British Guiana, Report of the 1947 General Election (Georgetown: 1947) p. 6, para. 14 and "Report of 1947 Election", 844B.00/12-2947, Skora, to The State Department, No. 76, 29 December 1947.

party.

The Labour Party contested thirteen of the fourteen seats while the MPCA Party fielded seven candidates, most of them members of the union's executive. Since neither the PAC nor the WPEO conceived of itself as a full fledged political party neither contested the elections. They did however support the independent candidacy of Cheddi and Janet Jagan, H.J.M. Hubbard and Frances Stafford.⁴⁸

Janet Jagan contested a Georgetown constituency and initially opposed the white conservative businessman Percy White. Fearing the success of Mrs Jagan, the popular liberal John Fernandes was encouraged to stand in the constituency. Using the East coast base as his constituency, Cheddi confronted another liberal businessman, John D'Aguiar. Stafford opposed Critchlow, an oversight which created moments of embarrassment for the PAC and the WPEO, while Hubbard faced the LCP moderate Nicholson. The main theme of this small group of individuals was self government, economic development and the creation of a socialist society in Guiana.

Of the fourteen members elected, five were successful Labour Party candidates, one from the MPCA and the rest were Independents one of whom was Cheddi Jagan. The success of the Labour Party was attributed to the assistance given by the

⁴⁸ Kilkenney, 25; Drakes, "The Development of Political Organisation . . .," 206 and 209; and Jagan, The West On Trial, 65 and Forbidden Freedom, 42-44.

Grenadian anti-colonial fighter, T A. Marryshow, who travelled to Guiana to canvass on behalf of the Labour Party; but they were the better organised group and appeared to the electorate to be the more militant and concerned.⁴⁹

Ten of the prospective representatives lost their two hundred dollar deposits on failing to win fifteen per cent of the votes cast as the electorate seized the opportunity to dispose of the old guard.⁵⁰ Only five of them were returned and of these only one had been a nominated representative.

The electorate was accused of being uncharitable to those who had given long service during a challenging twelve year period.⁵¹ Others were happy that those who had for so long treated the electorate with contempt and took access to the constitutional organs for granted had at last been deposed.⁵² The top layer of the colonial dispossessed was beginning to impact on electoral politics and was expressing its impatience with those unprepared to confront the unprogressive policy of HMG.

The nature of Dr Jagan's victory surprised those who believed that there were persons in the colony with an unchallenged right to sit in the Legislative Council. Janet Jagan lost a straight

⁴⁹ 844B. 00/12-2749, Skora, to The State Department, No. 76, 29 December 1947. "The Report on the 1947 Election."

⁵⁰ Guiana Diary, 35, November 1947.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

contest with Mr John Fernandes, one of the more substantial members of the Roman Catholic community in Guiana. The Church exploited its collective influence in an urban constituency virtually unaffected by the recent reform in the franchise qualifications and the contest between Janet Jagan and John Fernandes became a battle between the forces of good, the Catholic Church, and the forces of evil, communism. The Roman Catholic Church also mobilised its international resources and imported the anti-communist crusade into the colony.⁵³ The other disturbing feature of the election was the attempt to exploit ethnic differences for political advancement. The four candidates affiliated to the PAC all made inroads upon the sectional voting pattern but with the exception of Dr Jagan, their gains were not sufficient, given the absence of universal suffrage, to win a victory on that basis. In the urban constituency, the LCP pursued sectional voting preferences with undisguised vigour while in the rural constituencies both the MPCAP and independent East Indian candidates pursued a similar policy.

The New Legislature.

The post-election legislature was composed of several new faces. Among those expected to articulate the views of the working people were Dr J.B.Singh, Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, J.A Nicholson, Theo Lee and Cheddi Jagan. On the other hand

⁵³ CO. 537/2677, Political Intelligence Report, 1947; Drakes, "The Development of Political Organisation," 123; Interview with Janet Jagan, 22 August 1988 and Jagan, The West on Trial, 67.

W.O.R.Kendall, Daniel Debidin and Rev. A.T.Peters were expected to support liberal nationalist policies.

Among the conservatives were C.V. Wight, a Georgetown businessman, Dr G.M. Gonzalves who limited his legislative ambition to the improvement of his Corentyne constituency, C.P. Ferreira and W.A. Phang who supported the expansion of the rice industry and interior development, John Fernandes, a rabid anti-communist, Captain J.P.Coglan, a lawyer and former magistrate, with a strong following among middle class East Indians.

This group of conservatives were not reluctant to criticise British colonial policy in Guiana and particularly the slow pace at which colonial development proceeded, but they were thoroughly opposed to an extension of the franchise or the transfer of power to a Black and East Indian majority. They were not opposed to constitutional advance but preferred economic development. They therefore made common cause with the Colonial Office incrementalist approach to constitutional devolution.

The simultaneous exit of so many colonial worthies in 1947 gave special urgency to the issue of the nominated element.⁵⁴ The conservatives criticised the elected representatives for being inexperienced.⁵⁵ This was an attempt to secure the privileges

⁵⁴ CO. 111/791, Guiana Diary, December 1947 and George Seel to Sir John Snow, 28 July 1948. In this summary Mr Seel argued that in British Guiana colonial development necessitated the protection of European investment and in this sense was an impediment to self government.

⁵⁵ The Daily Chronicle, 30 November 1947.

of the old brigade. It was argued that the people having elected their representatives, it was necessary to allocate representation to important interests which otherwise might have remained voiceless.⁵⁶ The charge of inexperience levelled against the elected members was an indictment of the very system which the conservatives sought to preserve. Since 1891 those who acquired experience in colonial administration discredited themselves in the process and were defeated at the polls when the colonial system began the slow but inevitable process of freeing itself up.

In the face of this and similar criticisms colonial governors were quick to point to the dearth of experience and competence in the colony, a weakness which they claimed forced them to rely on a certain group for important guidance and information. It has to be remembered that colonial Governors were drawn from outside the colony and possessed very little background on the cultural, economic, social or political make up of the colony to which they were posted.⁵⁷ Administration to be effective needed to be informed. The weakness with the system was that colonial governors made themselves dependent on one particular group of persons for the information they needed to make important decisions. The tragedy was that the information received tended

⁵⁶ The Daily Argosy, 28 November 1947.

⁵⁷ WICC., LXI, 1177, January 1947. 5. On being appointed to the Governorship of British Guiana, C. Woolley was, as was the custom, feted by the West India Committee. In his reception speech he confessed, "I have never been to Guiana and must confess that I know very little about it". This was a vacuum which the West India Committee felt itself very competent to fill.

to be influenced by the needs and interests of this particular group.⁵⁸ The result was the perpetuation of an administrative culture that was partial and very often oppressive.⁵⁹

Those nominated by the Governor to sit in the Legislative Council included Vincent Roth, curator of the colonial museum and Thomas T. Thompson, a retired headteacher.⁶⁰ They were both nominated members in 1935-1947 legislature. W.J. Raatgever, G.A.C. Farnum, Geoffrey Smellie, C.V. Wight and C.A. MacDoon were the representatives of the Georgetown business community. F.J. Seaford, a defeated Independent candidate was the final nominee.⁶¹ Seaford had served on both the Executive and Legislative councils in the last legislature. Of the eight Raatgever, Wight, Smellie and Seaford had strong links with the sugar industry and the others found it expedient to support the interests of Sugar.⁶²

Seaford was preeminent. He was a Director of two of the colony's largest commercial entities, Booker Brothers McConnell Company Limited and the Demerara Mutual Life Assurance Society. As the

⁵⁸ See Lee and Petter, 19-20.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 20.

⁶⁰ The list of nominees appeared in The British Guiana Official Gazette, 10 December 1947.

⁶¹ HCD, 1948, 447, 18 February 1948. 234-35; Jagan, What Happened in British Guiana, (London: 1953), p. 8 and The West On Trial, 71.

⁶² Jagan, West On Trial, 71

political representative of Sugar, he presided over nearly every important board in the colony. The Governor claimed that Seaford's wide experience made him an indispensable element in the administration of the colony.⁶³ While it was true that this gentleman, over the preceding twelve years, had acquired considerable experience, it is very necessary to note that this was a direct consequence of the deformed nature of the political system in which only one group was permitted to acquire administrative experience, which was then used to deny others access to that experience and so perpetuated the disabling process.

Seaford's appointment immediately after he had been rejected by the electorate was vexatious and it was criticised in the press.⁶⁴ The Labour Party undertook to boycott the opening of the Legislative Council to demonstrate its displeasure.⁶⁵ The BGEIA, LCP, PAC, WPEO, TUC, BGLU and the MPCA Party protested at what they perceived as a serious breach of the democratic process and intensified the call for the abolition of the nominated element. On May Day 1947, the membership of these organisations passed a resolution against the nomination of defeated electoral candidates.⁶⁶ The reappointment of Seaford cast an unhealthy pall over the whole process in which the people were asked to

⁶³ Ibid. See also, MLC., 18 December 1947; HCD., 447, 18 February 1948. 234-35

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ CO. 111/799, Guiana Diary, May 1947.

choose their representatives. *It* aggravated local opposition to the nominated principle and won several new adherents to the anti-colonial movement.

The recently elected representatives in the Legislative Council quickly discovered that their ability to influence decisions made in the Executive Council was very limited even though the Governor had nominated three Labour Members, Singh, Critchlow and Nicholson to the Executive Council. For one thing they were outnumbered three to five; the others being the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General, the Colonial Treasurer, C.V.Wight and Seaford. For another the five tended to vote as a bloc against motions coming from the legislature and those which sought to benefit the workers at the expense of the colonial administration or the major economic concerns in the colony.

At its best the Labour Party was a group of ambitious career politicians, most uncommitted, some sincere and all optimistic, who by sheer critical zeal won the support of the frustrated and the dispossessed among the electorate. It was not surprising therefore that collectively they exerted even less pressure on HMG than their predecessors. This was due in part to the opportunistic nature of their representation and partly to the elevation of the leadership to the Executive Council which adversely affect^{ed} the functioning of the group. H.N.Critchlow, was unseated in a by-election petition, and Theo Lee was subsequently coopted into the Executive Council where he was

effectively muzzled, isolated and eventually politically alienated from popular politics.⁶⁷ There was therefore an absence of a significant political organisation, with a clearly thought out ^{ECONOMIC} development programme, ^{POLITICAL} strategy and constitutional goals represented in the legislature.

When Cheddi Jagan entered the colonial Legislature in 1947 he found an alliance with the Labour Party difficult to endure.⁶⁸ Labour's elected representatives frequently deserted the Party's platform and were not reluctant to abandon progressive Party principles in favour of anti-working class positions.⁶⁹ They abandoned the Party's position on moving a motion against the nomination of Frederick J. Seaford.⁷⁰ Subsequently, they voted against the abolition of the system of indirect taxation which oppressed the poor.⁷¹ Later they rejected a motion for the introduction of adult suffrage. Then they supported a tax on the domestic gold trade rejecting a similar measure on the exported

⁶⁷ From 1950 onwards Theo Lee voted against a number of motions intended to improve the lot of the working man. See for instance, MEC, 27 April when he voted against an amendment to the Rice Farmers (Security of tenure) Ordinance 1945 and again, MEC, 22 April 1952 when he voted against the introduction of Legislation to Provide Compensation for Improvements to Land Temporarily Acquired by Lease.

⁶⁸ Jagan, The West on Trial, 69-71.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 70-71. HCD. 19 and 20 December 1947 and reported in WICC, LXIII, 1202, February 1948. 42.

⁷¹ CO. 111/791, Woolley to A. Creech Jones, No. 433, 9 August 1949. (Confidential) and No. 12, 4 October 1948. (Secret).

trade.⁷² The export trade in gold was controlled by large expatriate concerns while the domestic trade was in the hands of small traders, pork knockers and gold smiths. Gradually it became clear that the liberal pronouncements which characterised Labour's electioneering campaign was simply a strategy to win the support of the recently enfranchised.

Jagan therefore chose to stand alone in the Legislative Council.⁷³ Operating alone, he was frequently isolated and his motions defeated but he refused to be silenced.⁷⁴ He was snubbed and laughed at but he never betrayed the PAC principles, or compromised its objectives or lost his enthusiasm. He remained the sole representative of /working people.⁷⁵ Finally, the colonial establishment tried to dismiss him as a rabble rousing communist.⁷⁶ /the

The issues exploited by Dr Jagan were either of a nationalist character or those which affected the welfare of the working people. This range was wide enough to include most topics discussed in the local legislature and as a consequence Jagan's advocacy was unrelenting. He was critical of the dominance of

⁷² Drakes, " The Development of Political Organisation, 120 and Jagan, The West On Trial, 71. PAC Bulletin, 17 December 1947.

⁷³ MLC., 6 January and 3 March 1948.

⁷⁴ Simms, 88 and Jagan, The West On Trial, 69-70.

⁷⁵ CO. 537/3824, Officer Administering the Colony to Secretary of State, 10 October 1948.

⁷⁶ HCD., 453, 8 July 1953. Col. 652.

Sugar, the indifference of the MPCA, the property and income qualification for voting and most of all colonialism. He exposed the gulf which separated the colonial administration and its sympathizers in the Legislative and Executive Councils from the critical concerns of the working people. For perhaps the first time in Guiana's history, an elected representative of Guianese descent was openly and publicly critical of the establishment. This act of leadership, perhaps more than any other sequence of events, seemed to ignite the flames of nationalism in Guiana. Particularly, it excited the emerging local intelligentsia.

Political Mobilisation and the Demand For Meaningful Reforms.

Dr Jagan received valuable assistance from the PAC and the Bulletin. When a new issue appeared on the Legislative Council Order Paper, the PAC and the Bulletin examined the ways in which it affected the colony and the welfare of the working people. The Bulletin described the advantages and disadvantages in the clearest terms and the presentation of the issues was simple and direct so that it was grasped by almost any reader.

Their response to these issues and the general conduct of the various members and groups in the Legislative Council highlighted the ongoing process of administrative indifference and injustice in the society. By listing the names and exposing the voting pattern of every member on every important issue debated in the Council, the Bulletin made it possible for the working people to become acquainted with those who defended the interests of the

dispossessed and those who championed the cause of the oppressor.⁷⁷

The PAC's interventionist approach to colonial politics, at the level of the work place, began in 1947 when the Transport Workers Union went on strike to protest against the authoritarian policies and practices of Colonel Teare, the English Director of the Transport and Harbours Department. Teare was a particularly overbearing Englishman who considered Black people as children and as such to be physically reprimanded whenever the good Colonel was so inclined. As a consequence of the strike action in the early months of 1948 Teare was removed from his post.⁷⁸ The Colonial Office was irritated that the Governor was not more supportive of Col. Teare even though they found it difficult to be charitable to the officer.⁷⁹ A subsequent investigation indicted Teare and he was transferred.⁸⁰ The PAC coordinated international and regional support and fraternal solidarity, day to day militancy, strike relief and soup kitchens. The leadership of the Jagans evoked concern in the Colonial Office that an East Indian politician could become so conspicuous in a

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

⁷⁸ See CO., 111/796/60270/4/2/1948 Transport Strike and particularly Woolley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 April 1948.

⁷⁹ CO. 111/791, Colonial Office Memoranda prepared by Ian Watt, 7, and 24 April; 22 May and 22 and 26 June 1948.

⁸⁰ See for instance, CO. 111/796 Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 70, 10 May 1948 in which the Governor accuses Teare of being temperamentally incapable of understanding the Transport and Workers Union and his coloured workers generally.

strike of predominantly Black workers.⁸¹

In 1948, field workers took strike action to protest at the unilateral imposition of a new field procedure they considered physically demanding and for which they were inadequately compensated.⁸² The workers took the opportunity to place a number of other issues on the bargaining table. The most contentious of these was recognition for the **Guiana Industrial Workers Union, (GIWU)** in opposition to the recognised bargaining union, the **MPCA**. The executive of the **GIWU** was strongly influenced by the **PAC** and the strike call received its most enthusiastic support on the east coast of Demerara. The coincidence between the militancy of the East Coast field workers and the ongoing activities of the **PAC** in the neighbourhood was not lost on the **MPCA**, the **SPA** and the colonial administration and was duly reported to the Colonial Office.⁸³

After three months the police were called in to protect the interests of sugar and five workers were murdered and twenty four

⁸¹ CO. 111/796, Governor to Secretary of State, 17 April 1948 and 28 August 1948. See also, Colonial Office discussions on 2 November 1948 and 10 August 1949, as well as comments by, Chief Adviser, DWO, West Indies to Secretary of State, No. 360, 27 August 1947.

⁸² Rose, The 1948 Enmore Incident, pp. 20-25, and Paul Singh, "Political Thought in Guyana: An Historical Sketch," University of Guyana: Department of Political Science Occasional Paper No. 3. (March 1972).

⁸³ CO. 111/796, Secretary of State to Woolley, No. 295, 30 June 1948 and No. 425, 16 September 1948; Sir S Caine to Woolley, No. 385, 17 July 1948; Woolley to Secretary of State, NO. 396, 19 July 1948 and CO. 111/797, Colonial Office Memorandum prepared by Ian Watt, 21 April 1949. See also, **MLC**, 7 May 1948 and **HCD**, 1948, 453, 8 July 1948.

others seriously wounded.⁸⁴ The groundswell of protests which greeted the shooting forced the Colonial Office to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the state of the sugar economy.⁸⁵ The Report was made public on 7 September 1949. The long delay was due primarily to Colonial Office dissatisfaction with aspects of the Report. Dissatisfaction concerned two recommendations; one for a subsidy of one pound sterling on each ton of sugar produced in British Guiana from the Imperial government, (a proposal which HMG rejected), and another, transferring to the colonial government responsibility for providing and maintaining medical, educational and housing services for some categories of sugar workers.⁸⁶

The commission was appointed after the workings of a local commission was criticised for the partial manner in which it handled the proceedings and legal representatives and other important witnesses withdrew from the proceedings.⁸⁷ HMG, preferring a general investigation into the state of the sugar industry was careful to ensure that the Commission did not become involved in an investigation of the strike action or the shooting

⁸⁴ Rose, The 1948 Enmore Incident, pp. 39-60.

⁸⁵ HCD., 453, 7 July 1948. Col, 365 but particularly, 454, 27 July 1948. Col, 110.

⁸⁶ CO. 111/796, Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 397, 21 July 1948 and No. 411, 27 July 1948 and Secretary of State to Woolley, No. 343, 3 August 1948. See also, BGEIA to Secretary of State, 20 July 1948.

⁸⁷ CO. 111/796, BGEIA to Secretary of State, 18 July 1948 and Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 397, 21 July 1948 and No. 407, 23 July 1948. See also, The Daily Chronicle, 17 July 1948.

incident.⁸⁸

The Venn Commission Report nevertheless indicted the SPA for years of worker exploitation and administrative intransigence and demanded that the system be reformed.⁸⁹ HMG found the report too liberal and was particularly concerned about the cost of the reforms it recommended.⁹⁰ It was equally concerned that the urgent nature of the recommendations suggested that they could not be deferred.⁹¹

The PAC had successfully made known internationally the conflict between the sugar producers and the workers and the brutal response of the colonial administration to working class protest.⁹² These activities provoked the SPA to obtain court orders restraining the leadership of the PAC and the GIWU from

⁸⁸ Great Britain, Report of a Commission of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry of British Guiana, (London: 1949). Col. 359. Venn Report 1949, p. ii.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 158-165.

⁹⁰ CO. 111/796, Report of Meetings held in the Colonial Office on 28 October 1948 and 19 May 1949; Colonial Office Memorandum prepared by Ian Watt, 21 April 1949 and 10 August 1949 and Lord Listowel to Prof. Venn, 20 May 1949.

⁹¹ CO. 111/797, Venn to Secretary of State, 16 February 1949, Report of A Meeting held in the Colonial Office on 19 May 1945 between members of the Commission officers of the "B" Department. See also, M.Wodehouse to Chief Advisor to Development and Welfare Officer, West Indies. 24 August 1949. and Chief Advisor, Development and Welfare Officer, West Indies, to Secretary of State, No. 360, 27 August 1949. MLC., 2 November 1950.

⁹² CO. 111/791, Report of a meeting held in the Colonial Office on 2 November 1948.

entering on the property of the SPA.⁹³ This ban remained in force right up to the 1953 elections when the people's pressure forced a partial withdrawal. The ban lost its effectiveness after the 1953 elections when the banned became the Ministers of the new government.⁹⁴

The involvement of the PAC in so open a manner on the side of the oppressed and the pressure exerted by Jagan in the colonial legislature attracted many to the organisation and its membership swelled as its activities expanded throughout the length of the coast.⁹⁵ This growth coincided with the disorganisation and eventual disintegration of the Labour Party and after a while pointed to the need for an organisation with broader objectives than those embraced by the PAC. The PAC was not organised to deal with the masses. Its leadership was not defined in terms of a formal structure of authority and responsibility. It could not formulate and implement policy with respect to a definite group of followers. It had no structure in terms of which it could recruit and maintain a following in the villages and urban neighbourhoods. Its sources of funds were extremely limited. Even the Bulletin was not really written for mass distribution nor printed for mass consumption. In other words, PAC did not have the organisational credentials of a political party, and a

⁹³ CO. 111/796, The Report of a Meeting held in the Colonial Office on 28 October 1948.

⁹⁴ See Woolley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 20, 9 January 1952 and OAG., to Secretary of State for the Colonies No. 112, 6 March 1953 and No. 115, 12 March 1953.

⁹⁵ Colonial Office Meeting on the topic, 2 November 1948

political party was what was needed more than anything else if the nationalist movement was to develop a mass base in preparation for any national elections that might accompany constitutional change. This realisation led to the formation of the **Peoples Progressive Party (PPP)** in January 1950.⁹⁶

Plans had ripened for the founding of this organisation at an earlier date.⁹⁷ The delay in the actual launch was due to the indecision of Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, who had been identified as a principal figure in the leadership structure of the new organisation.⁹⁸ Burnham was one of the colony's most celebrated scholars. At Queen's College, in Georgetown, he had won practically every academic honour available. In 1942, he was awarded the Guiana scholarship, which took him to the University of London, where he earned BA and an LL.B degrees. While in London as a student, he was president of the West Indian Students' Union and Vice President of the London Branch of the Caribbean Labour Congress. In the circumstances he had political credentials which established him among the leaders of the Caribbean. When he returned to the colony he quickly acquired a reputation as an outstanding courtroom barrister and public speaker. He was exactly what the movement needed. He was Black, middle class and intensely nationalist. He could be effective

⁹⁶ The two best known accounts of the formation of the PPP, Premdas' essay on the formation of the mass based party and Drakes, "The Organisation and Mobilisation...",". See also, Janet Jagan, Twelve Years of the PPP, (Georgetown: 1961)

⁹⁷ Drakes, "The Development of Political Organisations," 219.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

in blunting the cutting edge of the racist conservative Black middle class LCP.

Among the earlier leaders of the PPP were the Jagans, Ashton Chase, Sydney King, J. P. Lachhmansingh, Ram Karran, the Gaskin sisters, Jai Narine Singh and Forbes and his sister, Jessie Burnham. Building on the tradition of the PAC, the PPP undertook to unite workers and farmers, cooperatives, friendly societies, progressive businessmen and professionals, civil servants and housewives of all ethnic persuasions in order to end the exploitation and impoverishment of the Guianese people.⁹⁹ With its headquarters in Georgetown, the Party established a broad based organisational structure, converting informal PAC groups across the coastal belt, into full fledged local party groups.

Its programme of political education was nationalist and anti-imperialist. Its concerns encompassed more than local anti-colonial issues. It internationalised issues in a broad, relevant and simple programme of anti-colonial education. The Party targeted its programme to Guianese in general but focused more particularly on the powerless and disaffected working people.¹⁰⁰ So aggressive was this aspect of the Party's programme, that the Governor was by March reporting an extensive PPP fan out into

⁹⁹ The Thunder, 1, January 1950; Janet Jagan, Twelve Years of The PPP, 4-7 and New World Associates, "Changes in the Character of the Political Situation 1953-1962." New World Quarterly, March 1963. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Drakes, "The Organisation and Mobilisation," Premdas, 9-13; and Janet Jagan, Twelve Years..., 6-7.

rural districts.¹⁰¹

The Party utilised the theoretical analysis of "Scientific Socialism" which when simplified possessed dramatic appeal. The success of the programme was however due in large part to its relevance to the concerns of the working people and to the diligent and aggressive manner in which the party's literacy programme was applied.¹⁰²

Colonial Office officials preferred to believe that in subsequent elections the PPP had duped an illiterate population into voting for it. This disparaging oversimplification was in keeping with the administrative contempt with which all non European peoples were held. It was based on the belief, in the first place, that Black peoples could never achieve the same level of political responsibility as did Europeans and in the second place, from official reticence to concede responsible political institutions to colonial peoples. It however ignored the programme carried out by the PPP. Those who met these people came to understand how relevant the socialist analytical model was to the everyday experience of the Guianese working people and how effectively it was applied by the PPP. Even middle class liberals now found it difficult to deny or defend the exploitative nature of the colonial relationship and the unreformed injustices which

¹⁰¹ CO. 537/6155, Woolley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, (Secret Political Report) 27 March 1950.

¹⁰² Interview with Dr Cheddi Jagan, 14 May 1987.

characterised the system.¹⁰³

Hitherto, the radical leadership of the trade unions had promised socio economic betterment. They had so far failed to deliver it because the levers of power were under the control of the captains of industry who shared a working relationship with Whitehall. The working people were impressed with the militancy of the trade unions but recognised that deprived of political power they were at best limited organisations. The promise made by the PPP for a much more materially attractive future through the destruction of the overlordship of the white colonial elite made sense to a working people whose demands for socio-economic change were being constantly rebuffed by representatives of these very overlords.

Two important developments followed the successful launching of the PPP's anti-colonial education programme. Firstly, the working people acquired an appreciation of their circumstances that was rooted in the realities of the colonial relationship in general and, specifically, in the underdevelopment and neglect in their own colonial environment. They acquired an understanding of the process of their impoverishment, its genesis, unfolding and consequences. They came to recognise its prosecutors and their collaborators. They also acquired a simple but an effective appreciation of their circumstances within the context of regional poverty and discontent and its relatedness

¹⁰³ The membership and activities of the WPEO was a case in point. Kilkenny, 16-33.

to similar conditions in Africa and South East Asia.

Secondly the working people's consciousness which was constantly evolving, achieved an understanding, focus and unity of purpose which could not easily be persuaded or rebutted by colonial and plantation officials alike. It was not unusual for some of these so-called illiterate working people to possess a more profound explanation of colonial affairs than their overseers in the fields and their supervisors in the factories and in the offices.¹⁰⁴

This was one of the factors which explain the difficulties which Colonial Office political manoeuvring encountered in Guiana for the rest of the colonial period. It also helps to explain the adoption of radical anti-colonial postures by the political moderates in receipt of Colonial Office sponsorship and patronage.¹⁰⁵ The tolerance with which the Colonial Office was forced to accept this conflicting behaviour in the organisations it sponsored indicated a profound awareness of the realities of the political consciousness of the Guianese working people.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ 74ID.00/12-950, Burke to Department of State, 31, 10 February 1950.

¹⁰⁵ This was certainly true of local politicians Lionel Luckhoo, John and Charles Carter and Percival Cummings. CO. 1031/1592, Lionel Luckhoo to P.Rogers, 19 November 1956; Luckhoo to Nigel Fisher, 19 November 1956 and Colonial Office Memorandum prepared by Radford, November 1956. See also 1031/1539, Colonial Office Memorandum prepared by Radford, 28 June 1955 and Report by R.E.Radford on a Meeting with John Carter, Leader of the United Democratic Party, 5 August 1955.

¹⁰⁶ See for instance Colonial Office relationships with the National Labour Front and the United Democratic Party 1954-1958. CO. 1031/1183, Minutes Of Colonial Office with Members of the

In order therefore to understand the kinds of advocacy with which the 1951 Waddington Constitutional Commission, (see below), was faced it is necessary to appreciate the impact which the PAC, the WPEO and subsequently the PPP mobilisation had on the Guianese people and the limited social, cultural and even political organisations to which the people also belonged. The new perception of the Guianese electorate created problems for leaders of limited organisations such as the BGEIA, LCP, BGLU, the BGTUC and the MPCA. These organisations could no longer offer the former inadequate explanations for colonial impoverishment. Simultaneously they were deprived of the old ethnic arguments which they exploited for sectional support and the creation of antagonisms or conflict. They now encountered new explanations from the rank and file and were forced to measure up to that radicalism.

The Labour Advocate, the organ of the MPCA, a union which had become too familiar with the SPA, became one of the most articulate anti-colonial instruments in the colony. At the same time the leadership of the union affected an increasingly nationalist posture shedding its ethnic particularism. A similar change was observed in the LCP.

The colonial Governor noted that the LCP had launched its own organ, The Sentinel, and in order to compete with The Thunder, the organ of the PPP and The Labour Advocate, had acquired the

British Guiana Opposition Parties, November 1953, 1031/1415, Minute of Joint Meeting at BTUC Headquarters, 3 January 1954. These issues will be discussed later in this study.

services of R.B.O. Hart, proprietor and headteacher of the urban based Enterprise High School, who was colour conscious and anti-British.¹⁰⁷

A number of peripheral organisations, culture clubs, recreational groups and peoples' societies now openly discussed political issues from an anti-colonial perspective.¹⁰⁸ The TUC recognised the desirability of achieving a more integrated approach to its examination of colonial malformation in British Guiana and adopted a new radicalism. Local organisations learned that in order to keep or attract members they had to become more relevant and local leaders and those aspiring to political leadership quickly arrived at the same conclusion.

Since the end of the second great war the anti-colonial pressures augmented by domestic economic priorities induced HMG to declare increasingly liberal policy statements. In March 1945, the Secretary of State for the Colonies told West Indian Governors,

The declared aim of British policy is to quicken progress of all Colonial peoples toward the ultimate goal of self-government and I take this opportunity of reaffirming this basic aim to the Caribbean area.¹⁰⁹

On the face of it, this was good news for the Caribbean quite in

¹⁰⁷ CO. 537/6155, Woolley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, (Secret Political Report) 27 April 1950.

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion of some of these groups See Despres, pp. 152-178 and Drakes "The Development of Political Organisations," 192-200.

¹⁰⁹ Secretary of State for the Colonies to Colonial Governors, 14 March 1945.

harmony with long cherished sentiments. The euphoria was soon dashed however when a tendency to associate political evolution with the zealously pursued policy of regional integration and not with constitutional development of the individual units was observed.¹¹⁰ British Guiana immediately distanced herself from this Colonial Office initiative preferring to stress its own readiness for a greater degree of self-government.¹¹¹ This attitude reflected both the thinking and resolve of those representing the colony at the September 1947 Conference of Closer Association in the British West Indies at Montego Bay.¹¹²

Federation, as an aspect of Colonial Office policy initiative was premised on the belief that small states could not survive as

¹¹⁰ CO. 537/4389, Committee of Enquiry into Constitutional Development in the Smaller Colonial Territories, Discussion Paper "Towards a Federation of the West Indies: The Growth of an Idea" Paper Prepared by the Reference Section, Central Office of Information, London. 19 September 1949; CO. 537/4391, Committee of enquiry into Constitutional Development in the Smaller Territories, "Note on the Principal Regional Organisations in the Colonial Empire" October 1949; CO. 537/4392, Committee of Enquiry into Constitutional Development in the Smaller Territories, Evidence by Sir H. Rance, Chairman of Standing Closer Association Committee, 12 and 13 December 1949 and Secretary of State to Governors of the West Indies, 14 March 1945 and 14 March 1946.

¹¹¹ Great Britain, Report of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee, 1948-49, (London: 1950). Col. Paper No. 225. p. 106; G.K. Lewis, The Growth Of The Modern West Indies (New York: 1968), pp 343-360 and Jesse Proctor, "Britain's Pro-Federation Policy in the Caribbean. An Enquiry into Motivation" The Canadian Journal Of Economics and Political Science, XII, 3 August 1956. 322.

¹¹² Great Britain, Report of the Conference on Closer Association of the British West Indies, Montego Bay, 11-19 September 1947 (London: 1948) Cmd. paper, No. 7291. Resolution 2.

self-governing units.¹¹³ Further it was believed that economically these units could not attain self sustaining sufficiency in the foreseeable future.¹¹⁴ Britain was therefore prepared to extend limited constitutional advance to larger political organisations to diffuse the nationalist anti-colonial movement.¹¹⁵

While embracing the notion of a federal experiment Caribbean politicians nevertheless demanded an "increasing measure of responsibility" for the several units of the Caribbean.¹¹⁶ The representatives stressed that the "political development of unit states must be pursued as an aim in itself without prejudice and in no way subordinate to progress towards federation."¹¹⁷ In this forum, as in the regional trade union council, British Guiana pleaded its case for progressive reforms of the local constitution.¹¹⁸

Informed by this aspiration, Theo Lee, on 25 August 1948,

¹¹³ Secretary of State to West Indian Governors, 14 March 1945. Appendix 1, Great Britain, Memorandum on the Closer Association of The British West Indies Colonies, 1946-47. (London: 1947). Cmd Paper, No. 7120.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Fn., 109 above.

¹¹⁶ Great Britain, Report of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee, 1948-49, p. 106.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ CO. 111/810, H.N.Critchlow to Secretary of State, 29 November 1949; CO. 111/791, Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 433, 9 August 1948. (Confidential) and CO. 537/4880, OAG to Secretary of State, 27 September 1949.

requested the Legislative Council to support a motion for the appointment of a commission to consider the reform of the constitution.¹¹⁹ The resolution did not win the approval of the Governor and the ex-officio members, most of whom were conscious that the 1943-45 reforms had only been implemented the previous year. Additionally, the Colonial Office had undertaken to implement universal suffrage in time for the 1952-53 election. The motion was therefore considered precipitate, in that it did not permit enough time for testing the recently introduced changes nor for the formation of a considered opinion as to the future based on the progress of the 1943-1945 reforms.

Governor Woolley recommended a stay of at least a year to evaluate the existing constitution before embarking on further reforms.¹²⁰ He was mildly surprised when the Colonial Office ruled against him.¹²¹ The Governor was therefore forced to announce the willingness of HMG to approve the motion.¹²²

The Colonial Office response was essentially a difference in tactics rather than of strategy. HMG supported the case presented by the Governor but felt that an immediate announcement of HMG's intention to entertain a Commission would help to diffuse the militancy of the anti-colonial movement in the

¹¹⁹ MLC., 25 August 1948.

¹²⁰ CO. 111/791, Woolley to Creech Jones, No. 370, 11 August 1948.

¹²¹ CO. 111/791, Secretary of State to Woolley, 1 January 1949.

¹²² MLC., 28 October 1949 and 17 May 1950.

colony. The colony had recently experienced a long and bitter strike in the sugar industry in which a number of sugar workers had been killed. HMG was believed to be making a gesture of appeasement. It is very important to note that HMG did not intend that the commission should visit the colony prior to 1951. In this sense HMG gained an even longer respite than the colonial administration had been prepared to demand.¹²³

It was some two years later and after intense preparation and much colonial uneasiness that the personnel and terms of the commission were announced. Sir E J Waddington, Chairman, Professor V T Harlow, Dr Rita Hinden with Mr J D Flemmings as the Secretary were invited

to review the franchise, the composition of the Legislative and Executive Councils and any other related matters in the light of the economy and political development of the Colony and to make recommendations.¹²⁴

In the selection of the personnel for the commission HMG made a conscious effort to obtain a set of persons acceptable to the critical opinion of the Guianese, British and International community.¹²⁵ The Colonial Office emphasised familiarity with current colonial issues and development trends in colonial

¹²³ MLC, 17 May 1950; CO. 111/811, T. Lloyd to Woolley, 16 August 1950 and Woolley to Secretary of State, 29 September 1950

¹²⁴ Ibid., 28 September 1950.

¹²⁵ CO. 111/791, Colonial Office Memoranda by T. Lloyd, 12 July 1949 and I. Watt to Markham, 7 July 1949; CO. 111/811, T. Lloyd to Woolley, 24 June 1950.

constitutional advance.¹²⁶ It hoped that on those credentials the selectees would eventually win critical approval.¹²⁷

It came as no surprise however that there were critics. The first criticism was levelled at the general composition of the Commission, particularly the absence of a serving Guianese on the panel.¹²⁸ The second, was that the members were too closely associated with the Colonial Office to pursue an independent line in opposition to the Colonial Office's illiberal gradualism.¹²⁹

To secure experience and competence, Whitehall had chosen to rely on a particular background but the opponents had singled out this very qualification for criticism. The attack on familiarity was true of all the commissioners but it underestimated their capacity for independent action. Waddington, a Bermudian by birth, had a long and well rounded career in the colonial service. He had served as Chief Secretary in Guiana and Bermuda and as Governor of Barbados. He subsequently acted as Governor in British Guiana, while serving in the substantive post of Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Barbados. During this short

¹²⁶ CO. 111/811, T. Lloyd to Woolley, 24 June 1950 and Woolley to T. Lloyd, 3 July 1950. (Personal and Confidential).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ CO. 537/6115, Guiana Diary, V. October 1950.

¹²⁹ Ibid.,

We fear that they may be suffering from a condition of mind (preconceived notions about colonial peoples in Africa and elsewhere) from which it would hardly be possible for them to see, appreciate and understand the unique aspiration of British Guiana in South America as they the Guianese would like the Commissioners to see them...

period his administration was unpopular.¹³⁰

Harlow was a University don with a long list of research publications, many on the Caribbean. He retained an interest in the region with frequent visits and was regarded as an authority on the Caribbean.¹³¹ He had made his last visit to Guiana only the year before, when on a Caribbean lecture tour he presented a number of papers on British colonial administration, that were well reviewed in the colonial press.¹³²

Rita Hinden, a Fabian activist, was a scholar on the colonial process whose publications were used in the anti-colonial political education process that was under way in the colony.¹³³ Objectively therefore it might have been very difficult to find a more competent team to do service anywhere in the Caribbean but in the prevailing circumstances the Commission did not enjoy open and uncritical approval, especially as HMG had chosen not to include a Guianese on the panel.

¹³⁰ CO. 111/811, Sir Thomas Lloyd to Woolley, 24 June 1950.

¹³¹ V T. Harlow, Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623-87, (1925); A History of Barbados, (1926); Raleigh's Last Voyage, (1932); Christopher Codrington, (1932), Voyages of Great Pioneers, (1939).

¹³² V Harlow, "British Guiana and British Colonial Policy 1951- 1952" United Empire, LXII, 1952. 305.

¹³³ Among her publications read in Guiana were, Plan For Africa, (1941); Kenya, (1944); Fabian Colonial Essays, (1945); Local Government for the Colonies, (1950).

If the Waddington Commission had arrived in Guiana when HMG's intention was first announced in 1948 it would have encountered a highly politicised people desirous of profound changes in every aspect of the colonial relationship but it would also have met them at a point in time when they were bereft of creditable political leadership and devoid of the direction, support and authority which a committed and militant broad based political organisation gives to a disaffected people. This is not to underestimate the political authority of either the PAC, or the WPEO, which were both committed and militant and both offered effective leadership to broad based political constituencies. The point is that neither the PAC nor the WPEO were political parties as such and in this respect both had set themselves objectives which were of limited political engagement. When the Commission arrived at the end of 1950 both this political organisation and leadership had come to pass.

The political climate of the colony was very important. There was the usual concentration of political debate on the colonial hardships associated with British reconstruction.¹³⁴ Commodities were scarce, prices were high and wages depressed. Restiveness was curbed by war time restrictions kept in place long after the hostilities had been brought to a conclusion.¹³⁵ It was widely believed that this was to enable economic interests

¹³⁴ Vernon's Report on his visit to British Guiana December 1952. Internal memorandum: A comment on Vernon's report; F H R. Williams, 29 June 1953, Mayle, 12 June 1953 and Rogers 16 June 1953.

¹³⁵ MLC., 27 February 1942. See also, British Guiana, Report of the Department of Labour 1942. p. 8.

to retain the unrealistic wages paid to the colonial working people.¹³⁶

There was a vigorous political mobilisation drive and robust agitation around such issues as adult suffrage and self government. Anti-colonial feelings ran high and talk of another destiny, that of association with the United States or with one or other Latin American states was very current.¹³⁷ But there were broader issues of similar relevance to the angry unemployed which enjoyed increasingly popularity. Elected representatives and labour leaders alike discussed such demands as land settlement, fiscal justice, meaningful education, occupational mobility, adult suffrage, interior and general economic development and self government.

There was a high level of frustration and disillusionment over the lack, or slow pace, of colonial development and this tended to manifest itself in anti-British resentment.¹³⁸ All sections of the press, irrespective of their sponsorship and ideology were advocating colonial development and self government. The **Chronicle**, a particularly conservative daily newspaper was known

¹³⁶ Ashton Chase, One Hundred and Thirty Three Days of Freedom, (Georgetown: 1954), pp. 14-15.

¹³⁷ The seriousness of this notion has never been challenged and has created periods of acute unease for HMG's Representatives in the UN. The initial destiny with which Guiana was aligned was of course the Commonwealth but over the years this preference was replaced by the other destiny which, at various times, aligned the colony with Latin America, Venezuela, Brazil, a federation of the three Guianas or territorial annexation to the United States.

¹³⁸ CO. 111/799, Guiana Diary, 22-27, June and July 1949; CO. 537/4880, OAG to Secretary of State, 27 August 1949 and The Daily Argosy, 3 July 1949.

to have conceded that our economic position would probably improve if the people's representative were allowed to shape the policy of the country.¹³⁹

The constitutional issues were the most explicit. Universal adult suffrage, representative organs and self government. In short a definitive step on the road to eventual constitutional emancipation. The small concerns enjoyed similar currency. They had been the source of colonial conflict for quite some time and included the abolition of the nominated official, effective representation for the people through their representatives in the Executive Council, the abolition of the Governor's residual powers and a limitation on the authority of the Ex-officios.

In the post-1953 conflict, the Colonial Office and their local representatives attempted to portray these demands as the contentious construction of a communist inspired PPP, bent on achieving one party rule. But some of the issues formed the core of conflict-pregnant relations long before the advent of the PPP and indeed were not the peculiar aberration of the Guianese politician. They were the demands of an increasing number of nationalist politicians throughout the Empire .

In its brief to the Commissioners, the Colonial Office conceded universal adult suffrage but remained doubtful of the extent to which they could concede a liberal constitution. The process of

¹³⁹ Cited in Guiana Diary, 51, December 1950 and Woolley to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 12 January 1951.

making liberal constitutional concessions had already begun in the larger Caribbean islands and HMG found it difficult to withhold similar measures in Guiana.¹⁴⁰

The dilemma with which the Colonial Office was faced was not made easier by the criticisms of earlier Governors like Sir Gordon Lethem in particular, who found it difficult to conceal his profound disappointment with the Colonial Office's handling of nearly every aspect of colonial administration in Guiana nor by the current Governor, Charles Woolley who, even though a conservative administrator, could still find it possible to criticise British colonial policy in Guiana.

To add to this dilemma the Colonial Office considered it politically inexpedient to treat Guiana less favourably than either Jamaica or Trinidad where recently conceded constitutional reforms were more advanced and political leaders were perceived as being more manageable.¹⁴¹ To do so appeared indefensible in so far as HMG had under taken to provide advance organs, particularly since there was nothing to suggest that Guianese were less capable.¹⁴² Just as importantly, a reluctance to treat Guiana as liberally as either Trinidad or Jamaica, could adversely affect the Guianese perception of the general Colonial

¹⁴⁰ Waddington to Lloyd, 20 September 1950.

¹⁴¹ CO. 111/811/7, Jeffries to Harlow, 29 August 1950; Mayle to Waddington, 27 September 1950; Woolley to Lloyd, 4 September 1950; Waddington to Lloyd, 20 September 1950; Mayle to Waddington, 27 September 1950.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Office scheme for a West Indian federation.¹⁴³

But what was most critical however was the agreement reached between the Colonial Office, local officials and the conservative elements in Guiana, that with the concession of adult suffrage vested economic interests and other so-called minorities would receive special constitutional protection.¹⁴⁴ This was the Colonial Office's formula for countering the gains of adult suffrage and moderating anti-colonial aspirations.¹⁴⁵

The Constitutional Commission arrived in the colony on 15 December 1950 and had its introductory session on the 19 December. It began hearing evidence on 27 December and continued to hear evidence until 7 February 1951. During the course of its inquiry ninety witnesses testified even though they submitted memoranda, while an additional twenty three others gave oral evidence alone. Eight persons submitted memoranda only, while four persons requested private audience with the Commission. The Commission departed the colony on the 13 February after a stay of ten weeks.

It did not take the Commission long to recognise the extent to which the political maturity of the Guianese people outstripped

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Woolley to Lloyd, 4 September 1950 and Mayle to Waddington, 27 September 1950.

¹⁴⁵ CO.111/820, Minutes of a Meeting in the Colonial Office with representatives of the Guiana Sugar Producers' Association, 13 October 1950 and CO. 111/812, Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 44, 12 January 1951.

the miserly measure of constitutional advance conceded by HMG.¹⁴⁶ This retardation reflected the Colonial Office's perception of Guianese whom they considered immature and unfit for liberal constitutional advance.¹⁴⁷ The Commission were critical of the process of deliberate retardation in constitutional development and undertook to recommend the greatest degree of self government sustainable in the colony.¹⁴⁸ Dr Jagan the chief critic of the Waddington reforms nevertheless conceded that Guiana was granted one of the most advanced colonial constitutions of the period.¹⁴⁹

The liberal nature of the reforms were influenced by, and were a positive response to, the level of advocacy and the persuasiveness with which the Guiana case was argued before the Commissioners.¹⁵⁰ It was also an informed response to the knowledge, conduct and representative nature of those who appeared before the Commissioners.¹⁵¹ Voluminous evidence of colonial neglect was presented by successive delegations

¹⁴⁶ Waddington recognised the political maturity of the Guianese people, see Great Britain, Report of the Constitutional Commission 1950-51, Col. 280 Waddington Report 1951. (London: 1951). p. 19.

¹⁴⁷ CO.111/811/7, Woolley to Secretary of State, 4 September 1950.

¹⁴⁸ The Waddington Report 1951, p. 17.

¹⁴⁹ CO. 111/812, See Evidence of Jagan before The Waddington Commission, reproduced as Bitter Sugar, (Georgetown, 1954) and Jagan The West On Trial, 100.

¹⁵⁰ Waddington Report 1951, p. 16, para., 54.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 17, para., 57.

demanding profound changes in the colonial relationship.¹⁵² In the face of this strong colonial consensus and the forcefulness of their supporting arguments there was little room for constitutional malingering. The Commissioners nevertheless chose to be guided by caution and located their liberal concessions within a defensive framework of checks and balances which effectively retracted the liberal concessions.

Essentially the colony received limited internal self-government which placed legislative responsibility with a Legislative Council of twenty four elected members and three colonial officials. The Executive Council was reconstituted to contain six ministers selected by the leader of the party winning the majority in national elections based on universal suffrage, three colonial officials, a nominated Minister without Portfolio and the Governor. The new Executive Council was to be the principal instrument of policy. A State Council was also added to the government. It comprised nine members nominated by the Governor and a nominated Minister without portfolio. Thus the new constitutional arrangement represented a compromise by giving elected politicians virtual control of the legislature and of the Executive Council while guaranteeing in the State Council the participation of colonial interests through the mechanism of nomination.

The difficult problems they encountered were related to the checks and balances considered necessary to inhibit the exercise

¹⁵² Ibid., Appendix. IV, pp. 64-66.

of real power by the anti-colonial forces and for the protection of minority interests.¹⁵³ The Commissioners identified the solution to both in the residual powers of the Governor and in the restraining influence of the nominated element.

Throughout the history of colonial rule in Guiana and elsewhere both the residual powers of Governors and the role and function of the nominated element served, with singular distinction, to frustrate the democratic process, to perpetuate authoritarian rule and to preserve minority privileges.¹⁵⁴ There was therefore a disturbing continuity in the current Colonial Office preoccupation with the protection of minority interests against the welfare of the majority. The colonial experience conditioned colonial peoples to perceive these checks as the instruments of their oppression in the furtherance of minority interests and privileges and devalued the Colonial Office commitment to democratic constitutional advance.

This contradiction was not lost to the Commissioners who agonized over the exact form in which the nominated element was to be preserved in the new colonial assembly. They were divided and the division stemmed from an inability to reconcile contradictory traditions. The problem they conceded stemmed from the fact that the nominated element represented the surviving remnants of a

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 21. See also Griffiths to Woolley, No. 122, 6 October 1951 and Woolley to Griffiths, No. 696, 21 June 1952.

¹⁵⁴ Waddington Report 1951, p. 48, para., 11.

benevolent despotism which was then passing out.¹⁵⁵

The notion of imperial benevolence is a myth which seeks to distort the realities of undemocratic rule and clothe colonial exploitation and the oppression of colonial peoples with respectability. It possessed few adherents in the colonial world outside the narrow elitist group. It was therefore fitting that they realised that the device was regarded with **deep antipathy** in the colony.¹⁵⁶ They therefore sought to recommend its retention in the least objectionable form possible. The Chairman argued for its retention in a unicameral legislature. His colleagues, apprehensive of the potential for irredeemable conflict, argued in favour of a revisionary upper chamber in a bi-cameral legislature.¹⁵⁷

The Secretary of State, Griffiths, subsequently rejected the Chairman's suggestion. He reasoned that a uni-cameral body was bound to

create doubts as to whether the new constitution would, in practice represent, any greater advance on the old and thus prejudice the chance of obtaining that degree of public confidence and cooperation in the introduction of changes, which was so essential

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., Codicil. II, p. 48.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 42, para., 5 and p. 43, para., 8.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., Codicil's I and II, pp. 41-53.

to the success.¹⁵⁸

The statement of the Secretary of State suggested that the nationalist politician was incapable of differentiating between form and substance. The Secretary of State was concerned about the form in which the nominated element survived in the colony, while the nationalist questioned its right to survive.

There was little effort to reject the basis of the widespread unpopularity of the device. HMG both recognised and accepted its negative perception in the colonial state.¹⁵⁹ However benign the conception, in reality its function was to frustrate, obstruct and delay and as a consequence it was unpopular. In the past, minority interests enjoyed these privileges and came to believe that they were an intrinsic factor of survival. In the circumstances the nominated section was accepted as a necessary evil which HMG was forced to retain.

It would seem reasonable to conclude therefore that the nominated element was recognised as objectionable and its imposition likely to result in conflict in the colony. It would seem correspondingly reasonable to assume that the Commissioners, being aware of this, were forced to insist on its inclusion for two reasons. They shared a conviction that minority interests, (that is, American, British and other capital investments) would be threatened unless awarded this special protection, and they

¹⁵⁸ Secretary of State to Woolley, No. 122, 6 October 1951.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

believed that nationalist politicians, who consistently resisted this device would adopt a more conciliatory attitude to its imposition in the light of the other liberal changes granted.

It was instructive that the Commissioners and HMG Secretary of State recognised severe limitations in the Governor's residual powers, doubted their applicability, were convinced that they would never be used and that their retention would be the object of much criticism. They recommended and institutionalised them nevertheless.¹⁶⁰

The third device which incurred popular hostility was the allocation of ministries to the ex-officios, that is, the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General. There had been conflict over the official latitude of these functionaries in former legislatures. Their sweeping and conspicuous powers were founded in the undemocratic allocation of functions under a Crown Colony constitution. Efforts to reform the obnoxious aspects of Crown Colony rule had not succeeded in curbing the functional authority of these officials. Nationalist politicians hoped that with a meaningful thrust towards self government these functionaries would at last experience a diminution of powers. This was not to be. They were regaled with six of the most important ministries including foreign affairs, police, defence, and law and order. ¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Waddington Report 1951. pp. 22-3, para. 79.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 28-31, paras., 101-111; CO. 1031/ 811, Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 696, 21 June 1952 and Secretary of State to Woolley, No. 779, 5 August 1952.

The Commission's report was published on 19 October 1951. Before its release, it was the subject of intense Imperial deliberation. At a special Departmental conference on 3 August 1951, Divisional officers aired their views for the benefit of the Secretary of State.¹⁶² The Secretary of State reasoned that a unicameral system was unlikely to encourage a sense of responsibility among elected representatives. He feared that with the nominated members in a unicameral system of legislature, the elected representatives would, sooner^{rather} than later, demand either a reduction in their numbers or their complete withdrawal. It would then be politically inexpedient to revert to the bi-cameral system.

Governor Woolley was of the opposite view.¹⁶³ He was convinced that the bi-cameral system would be both ineffective and contentious. He cited the particular case of a matter discussed and approved in the Legislative Assembly being reversed in the Upper House. In the likely event of such a development there existed virtually no prospect of a joint session upholding a reversal since the Lower House would almost certainly carry the majority in a joint session. The delay or the reluctance of the Governor to convene a joint session would result in damaging rancour. With a uni-cameral system on the other hand, the nominated element would be strategically located in the House to educate and moderate during the course of the actual decision

¹⁶² CO. 1031/812, Colonial Office Memorandum, 14 October 1951.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

making process, before firm decisions were taken.¹⁶⁴

S.E.V. Luke was prejudiced in favour of a single chamber since the bi-cameral system had failed in Jamaica, while in Trinidad, the presence of the nominated element in a single chamber, though not a success, at least offered reasons for optimism. Sir Thomas Lloyd shared a similar conviction. He was opposed to the bi-cameral system which he felt was a hopeless failure in Jamaica while the uni-cameral system was producing encouraging developments in Trinidad.¹⁶⁵

In spite of the weight of dissenting opinion HMG chose to rely on a bi-cameral structure in Guiana. On the 6 October 1951 the Secretary of State for the Colonies communicated his acceptance of the bi-cameral system of Legislature for British Guiana.¹⁶⁶ In his dispatch to the Governor, he concurred with the view that Guianese on the whole demonstrated a commendable degree of political maturity and endorsed the principle of adult suffrage, an elected majority and ministerial responsibility for Guiana.¹⁶⁷

In dealing with the nominated element he was quite explicit. There was a problem of building into a liberal constitution, the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ CO. 111/812, Secretary of State to Woolley, No. 122, 6 October 1951.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

checks and balances which were an integral part of all democratic systems of government. In the case of Guiana, he concluded, the single chamber arrangement was not adaptable to the ongoing process of constitutional evolution. In such situations it provoked either apathy or political irresponsibility among the elected representatives. The very presence of the nominated element tended to create doubts as to the extent and quality of change the new constitution represented over the old. The bi-cameral system on the other hand, provided invaluable opportunity for revision and rejection of contentious legislation. Furthermore, it was a system more adaptable to the conditions in Guiana.

A few days later a Colonial Office summary stuck to its former reasoned position and concluded that in general constitutional theory, the case of bi-cameralism was strong but in the particular case of Guiana the uni-cameral legislature appeared to be more suitable and to offer better prospects of continuing ordered advance, stability and the maintenance of confidence.¹⁶⁸

The reasoning of the Secretary of State poses a few problems. To constitute a revisionary house with an overwhelming majority of the nominated element was in essence the creation of a deliberate bottle neck in the administrative process. While the nominated element was objectionable and contentious in a single chamber legislature, it possessed the advantage of allowing the

¹⁶⁸ CO. 1031/310, The substance of A B. Cohen to Philip Mitchell, 10 December 1951.

elected representative a better position to negotiate, if perchance reason had failed in the first instance. To create a separate citadel and invest the nominated element with delaying, revisionary and blocking powers was to enfeeble, frustrate and embitter the process of constitutional government. In the opinion of the nationalists they succeeded in producing the mere shadow of power¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Forbes Burnham, "The Constituent Report: Shadow of Power," The Thunder, (November 1951). 10-12.

CHAPTER THREE

REACTION TO THE EMERGENCE OF POPULAR POLITICS IN BRITISH GUIANA, 1953.

Introduction

Whatever their dissatisfaction with the Waddington Commission Report local politicians were eager to participate in the new constitutional organs. Most realised that the new legislature would play a crucial role in the final determination of both the nature and pace of constitutional development in the colony. A spirit of liberalism was manifest in the recent constitutions conceded by Whitehall and, whether self government was achieved within the federation or outside of it, they were confident that it was not too far off for British Guiana.¹

On the other hand events associated with the 1953 election represented the culmination of at least two significant processes, one internal and the other, external, closely related to constitutional development. Internally, the evolution of the People's Progressive Party, its programme of mass political mobilisation and the eventual defeat of the old colonial regime, set the stage for heightened conflict between the nationalists and the colonial bureaucracy. Externally the results of the election and the accession of the PPP to office brought to an end

¹ Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados were granted new constitutions with universal adult suffrage in 1944, 1945 and 1951 respectively. In 1945 a local Franchise Commission was reluctant to recommend adult franchise for British Guiana when even HMG was prepared to grant it.

the brief period of liberalism reflected in the ideas and efforts of the officials located in the West India "B" Department of the Colonial Office, between 1950-53, at least in so far as they applied to British Guiana.

There were times when officials in the Treasury, the Foreign Office, the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Colonial Office perceived colonial issues in the same light and there were times when they differed in their perception of colonial problems. The period 1950-53 was one when Colonial Office staff thought progressively and persuaded other influential departments and ministries to support their liberalism.²

The significance of this period of new understanding, at least in so far as the West Indies and Guiana, were concerned was reflected in the urgency with which colonial issues were discussed. A spirit of urgency prevailed in the "B" Department and was communicated to other agencies on which the

² J M. Lee and Martin Patter, The Colonial Office, War and Development Policy: Organisation and Planning of A Metropolitan Initiative (London: 1982). pp. 31-46 but particularly, pp. 38-46. and J.M. Lee, Colonial Development and Good Government: A Study of the Ideas expressed in Planning Decolonisation, 1939-64. (Oxford: 1967). In the first the writers examine the process of reorganisation starting from 1939. In the latter, Lee examines the general organisation of the Office right through to 1964. See also, A N Porter and A J Stockwell, British Imperial Policy and Decolonisation, 1939-64 (London: 1987) Vol. 1. 1938-51. pp. 39-45 but particularly, p. 43. It is however important to note that Goldsworthy, while supporting this argument for the period up to 1951 argues for a gradual loss of enthusiasm after the defeat of the Labour Government and the return of the Conservatives to office. "Keeping Change within Bounds: Aspects of Colonial Policy during the Churchill and Eden Governments, 1951-57" JICH, XVIII, 1, (1990), 81-108.

implementation of colonial development programmes depended.³ It is not easy to identify the main causes of this change of approach during and after the war, but there are a number of basic issues around which this change may be examined.

For instance British colonial economic policies were partial, debilitating and, on a number of grounds, indefensible. HMG was producing a number of policy initiatives, each conceived in a profound appreciation of the difficulties afflicting the colonial world but each in its final application was designed to aggravate colonial impoverishment and further antagonise nationalist sentiments.⁴ This trend greatly worried Colonial Office officials as especially after 1945 and with increasing frustration, they perceived liberal initiatives transformed into illiberal applications.⁵

Simultaneously Colonial Office personnel were visiting the colonial world in larger numbers and greater frequency than ever before and were witnessing at first hand the inadequacies and the

³ Rudolph von Albertini, Decolonisation: The Administration and Future of the Colonies, 1919-1960. (New York: 1971). pp. 99-114, but particularly, 108-114.

⁴ Porter and Stockwell, pp. 46-51. For the complete unfolding of this strategy see, CO 537/3047/19128/71. Ernest Bevin, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Clement Attlee, Prime Minister, 13 September 1947 in which he proposes the development of colonial resources for the American dollar markets. Then Prime Minister to Ernest Bevin, 16 September 1947 in which the Prime Minister accepts the idea. See also, Ivor Thomas to Stafford Cripps, 17 September 1947 and Cripps to British Governors in Africa, 12 November 1947.

⁵ CO. 537/4389, Memorandum prepared by W.H.Ingrams, 7 December 1949 for The Committee of Enquiry into Constitutional Development in Smaller Territories.

failure of colonial policies.⁶ They were thus brought into close contact, many of them for the first time, with the real world of colonial underdevelopment, the inadequacies of colonial allocations, the inoperable nature of colonial prescriptions, the underlying basis of anti-colonial sentiments, a seemingly universal hostility for the Colonial Office, and the entrenched nature of anti-British feelings within some sections of the colonial population. Close personal contact with the Caribbean and Guiana induced greater familiarity, sense of urgency and a willingness to press for meaningful development. It is, furthermore, impossible to underestimate the trauma of the working class revolt in 1930s or of the Report of the 1939 Royal Commission which indicted British colonial policy in this part of the world.

Colonial planners were also influenced by the bitterness of the anti-colonial struggle, beginning with India and continuing in Malaya, Kenya, the Gold Coast and elsewhere in the colonial world. The general tone of this struggle, was anti-colonial and anti-British, and on occasion even anti-Commonwealth and many genuinely feared for the future of the British Commonwealth.

⁶ Among the senior functionaries visiting Guiana were Lord Listowel, Minister of State for the Colonies in 1947, G.F.Seel, Assistant-Under Secretary of State for the Colonies; 1948, Sir Allan Burns, United Kingdom Representative at the UN and B.G.Smallman, Officer in the Colonial Office; 1949; Lord Listowell and W.L.Gorrell Barnes, Assistant Under-Secretary, Colonial Office; 1950, Sheila Ann Oglivie, Labour Advisor, Colonial Office and Sir Arnold Plant, Chairman, Colonial Economic Research Committee, 1951, S.E.V.Luke, H.T.Bourdillon and E.W.Barltrop; 1952, Lord Munster, George Seel, C.S.Eastwood, Assistant Under-Secretary, Colonial Office; Norman Mayle, Assistant Secretary, Colonial Office and J.Vernon, Principal Officer, Colonial Office. 1953, R.E.Rodford, West Indian Department, Colonial Office.

Colonial policy was also influenced by American anti-imperialism, which assumed particular relevance in the Caribbean which the United States perceived as falling within its sphere of influence. The United States was particularly sensitive to restiveness within the Caribbean and the implications of mounting discontent, since this unsettled the region and made the area more appreciative of communist rhetoric. In the post-1939 period the United States had established a number of Caribbean military bases and did not take kindly to the possibility of their engagement against the local population in the very likely event of further working class uprisings.⁷ The United States was prepared to promote its own brand of aggressive capitalism in the region but the British were no more prepared to accommodate American penetration than they were to admit the communists.⁸

Whitehall bridled at the thought of American interference. In matters of constitutional affairs they were not persuaded that the Americans had acquired the competence for effectively discussing, advising on, or dealing with the colonial question in the region.⁹ However, because of the dominance of American

⁷ Howard Johnson, "The Anglo-American Caribbean Commission and the Extension of American Influence in the British Caribbean 1942-1945." Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, XXII, 2, July 1984. 182.

⁸ Ibid., 182-192. William Roger Louis, Imperialism At Bay, 1941-45: The United States and the Decolonisation of the British Empire, (Oxford: 1977). pp. 7-26 and 187-210.

⁹ FO. 371/107064/53. Nigel Ronald to UN. Political Department, 30 December 1952, and Minutes compiled by M S. Williams of Anglo-American French discussion on the Anti-colonial lobby in the UN on 5 June 1953.

capitalism and the dependence of the United Kingdom on aid from that source, the American idea of a Caribbean Commission was accepted.¹⁰ The presence of this organisation and its inquisitorial function in the region encouraged the United Kingdom government to adopt increasingly liberal policies in the region.

A very significant force of persuasion was the anti-colonial crusade undertaken by several states in the United Nations which could be criticised but not ignored by imperial powers. Britain never accepted the right of this organisation or its various sub-committees to intervene in the affairs of her colonies.¹¹ In spite of this "principled position" she nevertheless found it convenient to offer nominal cooperation, as she came to recognise that her criticism never deflected the determination of the UN committees to investigate colonial affairs.¹²

Generally, however, the post-war period was one in which the Labour Party had embarked on a policy of limited colonial disengagement, and as a consequence she was not reluctant to issue enlightened policy statements which encouraged her

¹⁰ CO. 318/455, American Interests in the British West Indies; International Economic Studies Institute, (IESI). Raw Materials and Foreign Policy, (Washington: 1952), pp. 44-61. For a study of the earlier period, see Howard Johnson, 180-203.

¹¹ FO.371/107107/1953. Circular by Anthony Eden No. 031, 17 March 1953 and FO. 371/107032/1953. Sir Gladwyn Jebb to the Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden, 12 November 1953 and FO. 371/107070/1953. Lead Paper for Tripartite Discussion on the Colonial Question in the UN., 5 and 6 May 1953.

¹² FO. 371/107064/1953. B.O. Gidden to M.S. Williams, 31 January 1953.

officials to formulate liberal policies and press for their implementation.¹³

Internally there were a number of factors which may also have contributed to the application of liberal policies to British Guiana. Foremost among these was the massive backlog of social and economic disrepair which bred and nourished colonial discontent. This failure to initiate development provoked the criticisms of former colonial administrators like Sir Gordon Lethem.¹⁴ These criticisms were subsequently echoed by the PAC and then the PPP. The success which attended the efforts of this organisation among the working people threatened to destabilise the colonial administration.

In the circumstances colonial officials of "B" Division were willing to experiment with reforms which promised economic development, reduced the bases of anti-colonial criticisms and *create an environment in which to fashion a new colonial ruling elite.*

¹³ R F Holland, "The Imperial Factor in British Strategies from Attlee to Macmillan, 1945-63". Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, XII, 2, January 1984. 165-86; Albertini, 159.

¹⁴ Sir Gordon Lethem, 1941-1947, was perhaps the most rebellious of the Governors appointed to Guiana. But before him there were Henry Irving, 1882-1884 and Walter Egerton, 1912-1917. Lethem's letters speak of untold disappointment and frustration with British colonial policy. He was not reluctant to advise HMG to consider seriously the other option, that of handing Guiana over to the UN Trusteeship Council or some other agency more disposed to developing the colony. Lethem to Arthur Creech Jones 18 June 1947; 26 June 1947; 5 July 1947 and 25 July 1947 in CO. 537/2245, Correspondence between Lethem and Secretary of State, Creech Jones.

In the previous chapter considerable attention was devoted to the evolution of the People's Progressive Party, its work, particularly among the working peoples, and its contribution to the development of political consciousness in British Guiana. The substantial purpose of this section is to focus attention on the preparations for the 1953 elections, the success of the PPP, and its attempts to effect the reforms in its election manifesto. It will also examine the various responses both local and foreign to the performance of the party at the polls and in government.

The 1953 Elections

As early as August 1950, the Vice-Consul to the United States Consulate in Guiana, was concerned about the growing influence of the Party in local politics and particular misgivings about its influence among the working peoples.¹⁶ By March 1951, he recommended arranging an alliance of local forces to counter the growing popular appeal of this PPP.¹⁷

In October 1951, Cheddi Jagan and the PPP were discussed at a Colonial Office meeting at which it was noted that the Party adopted a consistent position on such issues as self-government, colonial development, federation with dominion status, wholly elected local government bodies, land reforms and the control of the major industries in Guiana.¹⁸ Vernon concluded that Jagan

¹⁶ 74ID.00/12-950, T E.Burke, American Vice-Consul, (AVC), to The Department of State, No. 74, 9 December 1950.

¹⁷ 74ID. 00/3-851, American Consulate, Georgetown to The Department of State, No. 109, 8 March 1951.

¹⁸ CO. 1031/776. Vernon to Mayle, 31 October 1951.

possessed a most thorough understanding of the main problems of British Guiana and that he adopted an intelligent approach to the solution of these problems.¹⁹ Officers of "B" Division concurred concluding that Jagan was destined to play a significant role in the political future of Guiana and attempted to so arrange his tour in Britain that he would be exposed to influences which would moderate the tenor of his politics.²⁰ Notwithstanding this recognition the party had consistently expanded its popular base and there was no sign that the exposure had succeeded in moderating the mood of the party or its leadership.

By 1953 the PPP possessed among its numbers representatives of all sections of the labour force of the sugar industry; the peasant farmer; cane, rice and ground provision; the domestic worker, the waterfront worker, the market-vendor, the colonial civil servant; clerical and junior ranks, the colonial public servant; nurses, police, postal, teacher and transport, the small businessman, the young professional, and the large army of unemployed.²¹ The ease with which the PPP was able, over the years, to expose the local middle class and others as the agents of the colonial bureaucracy and, therefore, the enemy of the working people, effectively undermined the influence of these groups either as political representatives or as ethnic leaders

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Some New World Associates, "Changes in the Character of the Political Situation, 1953-1962," New World Quarterly, I, March 1963. 74.

during the critical period leading up to 1953, a factor which assumed critical importance during the electoral campaign.²²

The development programme canvassed by the PPP consolidated the popular appeal of the Party. It aimed to raise the standard of living of the people; provide equal opportunity of employment and promotion; democratise public institutions; guarantee civil liberties; improve social services on the strength of increased productivity and win self-government and independence for the colonial state.²³

This programme entailed the recognition of trade unions enjoying the confidence of the workers; holiday with pay; the repeal of the Trades Dispute (Essential Services) Ordinance, 1942, an emergency war measure . which was retained and exploited to inhibit industrial action; promotion of all forms of economic development; preference for manufacturing over extractive industries; encouragement of private capital but limiting the amount of profits to be exported annually; drainage, irrigation and sea-defence; land reforms including the development and distribution Crown lands; security of tenure for the peasantry and a review of the rental values of rice lands; the creation of agricultural machinery stations to aid peasant rice farmers; fixing profitable prices for farmers' produce; reform and reorganisation of local government organs and

²² Simms, 85-88.

²³ PPP, The Election Manifesto of the People's Progressive Party 1953, (London: 1953).

an investigation of the Public Works Department; training of technicians locally and a reduction in the dependence on expatriate personnel; remodelling the education system to respond to local needs and to prevent the further production of displaced educated elite; upgrading the Health services with particular reference to rural health; house building schemes both rural and urban; legislate for the right of recall of unpopular elected representatives; repeal the ban on literature and the free movement among Caribbean peoples.²⁴

Because adult suffrage had significantly expanded the demographic range of the electorate, political parties contesting the elections found it necessary to campaign in as many constituencies as possible. The introduction of universal adult suffrage meant that the old method of personal approach and club level canvassing was no longer enough to ensure victory. What was more, those seeking the support of the electorate found it necessary to persuade the newly enfranchised electorate of the relevance of their programme and of their resolve to effect the programme once elected. Further, because there was still a large number of independents, each perceiving himself as the representative of a significant following in his constituency, it was incumbent on the parties contesting the elections to appeal directly to the voter if victory was to be assured.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 74ID.00/4-253, William P Maddox, (ACG-Port of Spain), to the State Department, No. 205, 2 April 1953. See also, Guiana Times News Magazine, IV, 3, (July-August, 1953). p. 4. Colin A. Hughes, "The British Guiana General Election, 1953" Parliamentary Affairs, VII, (Spring 1954). 217.

Meetings were in general well attended, with the PPP, in particular, drawing crowds in excess of 500 in rural and urban areas.²⁶ These numbers grew steadily as the election campaign developed. As the popular support for the PPP became increasingly manifest certain sections of the opposition formed a combination to subvert this popularity. These elements may be placed into two broad groups.²⁷ Within the first was the colonial interests of sugar, that is, the Sugar Producers' Association and the main union in the sugar industry, the MPCA. The local press representing sugar and conservative interests was joined by the church in the second group.

The SPA banned members of the PPP from entering the sugar estates, a move which sought to dislocate the party's access to, and relations with its supporters among the estate labour force.²⁸ This crude effort to subvert the political process was criticised in most liberal quarters not least of all within the Colonial Office even though it was supported by the colonial Governor and the Secretary of State.²⁹ Subsequently, the SPA

²⁶ 74ID. 00/4-253, Maddox (ACG) Port of Spain to the Department of State, No. 205, 2 April 1953 and 74ID. 00/5-1253, No. 254, 12 May 1953.

²⁷ Drakes, "The Development of Political Organisations..." 245-48 and 265-67.

²⁸ CO. 1031/995/1952. Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 21, 9 January 1952; OAG., to Secretary of State, No. 111, 6 March 1953 and Jagan to Colonial Secretary, 19 March 1953. See also, CO. 111/809/2/1951. Vernon to Mayle, 10 November 1951; Mayle to J.G. Campbell, 13 November 1951; OAG to Secretary of State, No. 609, 16 July 1951 and Rita Hinden to Mayle 20 March 1951.

²⁹ Ibid., Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 9, January 1952; Vernon to Mayle, 8 November 1952 and 18 March 1953 and Mayle to Vernon, 24 March 1953. MEC, 10 February 1953.

attempted to win a postponement of the election from the scheduled April date. They claimed that election in April would seriously dislocate the sugar crop.³⁰ The Officer Administering the Government dismissed this claim as ridiculous thus denying the Secretary of State ground for supporting it.³¹

At another level, the SPA, sponsored the activities of the MPCA, aimed at undermining the popularity of the PPP among the sugar workers and subsequently funded an MPCA four page supplement in the local press which portrayed the PPP as the harbingers of social and economic catastrophe.³²

The local press, amid expressions of admiration for the effective organisation of the PPP, consistently reported negatively on the consequences of a PPP victory. This was the particular obsession of Seal Coon, the expatriate editor of The Daily Argosy, the newspaper controlled by sugar interests in British Guiana. Coon prosecuted a venomous attack against the PPP, a crusade which did not subside with the declaration of the electoral results.³³

³⁰ CO. 1031/310/1952. Secretary of State to Gutch, OAG, Guiana, (Telegram). No. 442, 23 December 1952. (Priority and Confidential).

³¹ Ibid., Gutch to Secretary of State, (Telegram) No. 432, 27 December 1952 and No. 117, 13 March 1953.

³² The Daily Argosy, The Daily Chronicle, and The Guiana Graphic, especially throughout the months of February, March and April.

³³ 74ID.00/5-1253. Maddox, to The Department of State, No. 254, 12 May 1953; Minutes of The House of Assembly, (MHA) and CO. 1031/118/1953. Mayle to Savage, (Personal and Confidential), 8 July 1953.

Another influential opponent was the Church, especially the Roman Catholic denomination, which combined locally and utilised its international contacts, to vilify the PPP. It must be remembered that this was not the first occasion on which the Church had marshalled its considerable resources, both local and international, to campaign against those elements it considered unworthy of electoral support. It had done so with some success during the 1947 elections when it was instrumental in the defeat of Janet Jagan, but that was at a time when its local control was far more effective due to the restricted nature of the franchise.³⁴

There were five other political parties campaigning for the election. These were The National Democratic Party (NDP), The Peoples National Party (PNP), The United Farmers and Workers Party (UFWP), The United Guianese Party (UGP) and The Guianese National Party (GNP).³⁵ While each of these parties fielded different numbers of candidates, depending on each party's perception of its chances within specific constituencies, they presented nearly the same issues to the electorate irrespective of their ideology or class interests.

The NDP had the most experienced candidates. Several of them had served in various capacities in the old legislature and some in

³⁴ Jagan, The West on Trial, 67.

³⁵ The information on the political parties and personalities in this section of the paper are drawn from the three following documents, CO. 1031/776/1953 Political Parties and Organisations. 74ID.00/5-1253. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 205, 2 April 1953. and Hughes, 215-216.

the Executive Council. The NDP was closely allied to the LCP and appealed to Black racist sentiments. Its main candidate was John Carter, referred to affectionately among some sections of the urban community as Handsome John. Carter was a Black middle-class barrister with a background of liberal political advocacy. Dr Jacob Alexander Nicholson, city medical practitioner and Black racist, with a long record of reactionary behaviour in the local legislature, including his vote against adult franchise, was the most dynamic speaker in this party. William Rudyard Oscar Kendall of New Amsterdam was the third leader of the party. They had all served in former legislatures. The fourth leader of the NDP was John Fernandes. As mentioned above he was a Portuguese businessman of considerable repute. Apart from the leadership of the PPP Fernandes was undoubtedly the most trusted politician in the colony and outside of politics perhaps the most trusted Guianese of the period. No one seriously challenged that distinction and it was not surprising that he was popularly referred to as Honest John. As was shown earlier his power base was the Church in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular and from 1947 Fernandes had been one of the main leaders of the anti-communist movement in Guiana.

The NDP perceived its strength in the two urban centres of the colony where it considered itself unrivalled. While Fernandes focused on the middle class conservatives, the others focused primarily on the urban Blacks. The party's platform consisted of an attack on underdevelopment, colonialism and communism. It demanded self-government and colonial development. Some members

of its leadership professed to be anti-British and anti-colonial but was nevertheless supported by the planters, big business and the Church. The NDP nominated eighteen candidates to the urban and interior constituencies.

The PNP splintered from the NDP as the "Independent Socialist" in late December 1952 and then, changing its name, announced in February 1953 that it would contest the elections. This party reconciled the obvious contradiction which existed between the racist, anti-British, and self government seeking section of the NDP and the others also representing the more conservative interests of the Church and Sugar. For instance while the Church did not openly oppose self-government it was not anti-British. On the other hand while Sugar supported elements in the NDP, it was neither in favour of self-government for the colony nor anti-British. The splinter rid the NDP of the more extreme section which was strongly influenced by, and became the political arm, of the LCP. The PNP was led by R.B.O.Hart. The party campaigned on the same issues as did the NDP but was explicitly racist and more than any of the others, urban bound. The PNP nominated seven candidates to the urban constituencies.

The United Guianese Party (UGP) was formed in December 1952. It announced itself as the European party and was led by the arch conservative and successful Guianese businessman Claude Vibert White. It represented all that was conservative and very colonial in Guiana. It was opposed to federation, was very colour and class conscious and supported British Colonialism in Guiana even

though it criticised the "anti-Guianese policy" of the British government. Foremost among those policies was adult suffrage and the Waddington Commission Report. The UGP also fancied its chances in the capital city of Georgetown and fielded eight candidates, most of them in urban constituencies.

The Guianese National Party (GNP) was perhaps the most unusual of the parties in the 1953 elections in that it did not field any candidates. This is not to suggest that members of this party did not contest the elections; several most certainly did but while they campaigned as a party they contested seats as independents. The party was led by the highly respected rural physician, Rohan Loris Sharples. Sharples was very popular on the Corentyne where Cheddi Jagan was born and where the PPP was perhaps strongest. It was strongly believed that Sharples was encouraged to participate by middle class East Indians opposed to the radical land reforms espoused by the PPP. The GNP was led by middle class rural gentlemen who enjoyed the high esteem of their constituencies. Both Sharples and popular school teacher, Charles Clarence Bristol were regarded as the founder leaders. Though conservative on issues of land reform, education and federation all of which they opposed, the party canvassed on the twin issues of self-government and colonial development. Five members of this party were nominated for various rural constituencies.

The United Farmers and Workers Party (UFWP) was formed in September 1952. This party has never been able to live done the

notion that it was the party of the Debidin family. It fielded three candidates, two of whom were Debidins, while the leadership and membership of the Party were said to have been composed of Debidins. Daniel Debidin had served in the 1947 legislature, and his belief that adult suffrage was withheld simply to deny East Indians effective political representation had made him an unrepentant representative of the East Indian community. As a consequence he was branded a racist. His platform showed little difference from that of the PPP, the main difference being the perception of his constituency in terms of race. The UFWP also rejected federation unlike the PPP which enthusiastically supported it.

The similarity of the electoral platform of the parties contesting the 1953 election provoked complaints in the local press which resulted in appeals for the NDP, PNP and the UGP to combine and concentrate upon defeating the common enemy, the PPP. It was believed that the PPP with the better organisation, the widest support and the best articulated manifesto, had influenced the others to copy its platform to command a hearing from the electorate. While there was some truth in this, it was apparent that the demands made during the election campaign were dictated by the state of economic underdevelopment and political retardation in the colony.

The Waddington Commissioners were convinced that given the embryonic state of party politics in the colony no party could

win an overall majority.³⁶ This initial assessment seems to have informed all subsequent evaluations. The PPP shared a similar conviction thinking that it could win more than nine or ten seats. An American assessment, based on local media reports that the PPP had only 25 electoral percent, predicted that the PPP would win no more than five or six seats.³⁷ It did however observe that the Party membership embraced all ethnic groups and geographic locations and as a consequence could spring a major surprise.³⁸

The extension of the franchise necessitated the preparation of a new voters list; enumeration between 16 and 25 June 1952 produced a revised list of 205,296 registered voters.³⁹ These voters were located in constituencies also recommended by the Waddington Commission. These constituencies varied considerably in size: particularly in the interior districts where few persons resided, the numbers apportioned to a constituency tended to be very small.⁴⁰ As a consequence of this disparity there were

³⁶ CO. 111/812/1-1951. Colonial Office Discussion of the Codicils on 3 August 1951 and The Waddington Report 1951, pp. 41-53.

³⁷ 74ID.00/4-253. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 205, 2 April 1953 and 74ID.00/5-2853. Margaret Joy Tebbitts, Second Secretary, London to The Department of State, No. 5080, 29 May 1953.

³⁸ 74ID.00/4-253. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 205, 2 April 1953.

³⁹ MEC, 25 March 1952 and H R. Harewood, (British Guiana), Report of The General Election 1953, (Georgetown: 1970). (Reprint), p. 5, paras. 12-13.

⁴⁰ The Waddington Report 1951, 57.
Great Britain, Report of the Constitutional Commission, 1954, (London: 1954). Cmd. 9274. The Robertson Report 1954, p.

difference as great as between 3,450 and 13,353.⁴¹ There were 131 candidates, 58 of whom were sponsored by their parties and 73 independents.

In final preparation for the election the new constitution was adopted by the Legislative Council on 3 April and ballots were cast on 24 April.⁴² An enthusiastic response resulted in the completion of balloting in some polling districts long before closing time.⁴³ The number of 156,226 or 74.8 percent votes cast was regarded as very high when compared with the rest of the Caribbean.⁴⁴ There were 152,231 or 72.8 percent valid votes which again produced very flattering comparison with the major Caribbean islands, Jamaica, (1944), 58.7, Trinidad, (1946), 52.9 and Barbados, (1950), 64.6 percent.⁴⁵ The high turn out, the low incidence of spoilt votes, the peaceful conduct of the polls and the general enthusiasm of the electorate justified the introduction of adult suffrage and particularly the abolition of the literacy test.

In spite of the various predictions the supporters of the PPP ensured that the party had a convincing victory. The party with

30, para. 83.

⁴¹ H R. Harewood, p. 25.

⁴² The British Guiana Gazette, 2 and 7 April 1953; MLC., 24 April 1953 and Harewood, p. 15, para. 51.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 15 para. 51.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 22. Table 1 A. Summary of Votes Cast.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Table, 5.

77,695 votes polled 51 percent of the valid votes cast and won 18 or 75 percent of the available seats. A careful examination of the statistical aspects of the results, showed that eleven of the party's candidates polled clear majorities over all their opponents put together.⁴⁶ The NDP, the only other party to win seats, polled a distant 20,032 or 13 percent and won two of the six remaining seats.⁴⁷ The four other victorious candidates were independents.

PARTY	VOTES	SEATS	NO. CONTESTED ⁴⁸
People's Progressive Party	77,613	18	22
National Democratic Party	20,442	2	16
United Guianese Party	5,961	0	7
People's National Party	2,274	0	6
United Farmer's and Workers Party	1,623	0	2

The PPP won each seat at an average of 4,316 votes while the opposition won theirs at the high poll of 12,423.⁴⁹ Fourteen of the successive candidates gained a majority over all other candidates in their respective constituencies and of this number

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 24. Table 1,c. Return of candidates Elected for Each Constituency and Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁸ Colin Hughes, 218.

⁴⁹ Harewood, p. 16.

thirteen were PPP candidates. The other candidate was an independent. Seventy eight candidates lost their deposits.⁵⁰

The results confirmed the almost even distribution of the support cultivated by the PPP except in the Northwest and the Rupununi areas where it had been unable to organise effectively due to the high cost of travel to and sustenance in these isolated areas.⁵¹ But even so, the PPP was still able to secure one of the five interior seats.

The results reflected massive overall support among the Blacks, East Indians and others for the programme articulated by the PPP. The party was strongest in the rural coastal districts and on the Corentyne, where it polled nearly two thirds of the votes. But support was strong in the capital as well and there the party won every seat. In these constituencies, middle class Blacks and others were surprised at the level of rejection by the newly enfranchised. In only one constituency, won by the PPP, did the opposition candidates poll more votes combined than did the PPP.

This fact effectively ~~demolished~~ ^{contention} ~~the~~ that a proliferation of parties split the votes and in this way made a PPP victory possible.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Jagan, The West on Trial, 116.

⁵² Hughes, 219.

Of the eighteen successful PPP candidates, there were nine East Indians, six Blacks, two whites and one Chinese.⁵³ It would have been most difficult to obtain a closer representation of the ethnic composition of the colony. Cheddi Jagan, W.O.R. Kendall, Theo Lee and N.W.D. Phang were the four survivors of the previous legislature. Both Phang (Northwest District-Independent) and Lee (Essequibo Islands-Independent) were conservatives who supported liberal policies and possessed reasonable parliamentary records. Kendall, an LCP-NDP moderate, ^{contested the} New Amsterdam constituency.

Reactions to the Results of the 1953 Election

When the official announcement was made on 2 May 1953 the local press, the Church and big business, notably sugar and bauxite, were very perturbed. In spite of their opposition to the PPP and to the recent liberalism emanating from the Colonial Office they had come to accept that change was inevitable, but few were prepared to accept change on such a scale. Sugar, more than most was determined to resist to the bitter end any change which challenged its command of the social system.⁵⁴ In the circumstances the various responses to the results took on special significance.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ The managers of the colonial economy publicly expressed a willingness to work along with the new government but their actions betrayed a contrary inclination. See The Daily Chronicle, 30 April 1953 and CO.1031/925/1953 which contains an Internal Memorandum by Windsor dated, 6 May 1953 with the reactions of Demba's manager, Mr. Nichols. The SPA subsequently exploited its Colonial Office contacts to have a situation develop which would permit a retraction of the constitution.

The Colonial Office claimed that the PPP had been expected to perform creditably but they were surprised at the overwhelming support the party had received.⁵⁵ American observers in London thought the results represented a near disaster for Colonial Office preferences in Guiana. They considered the PPP victory a threat to British colonialism in the region.⁵⁶ Colonial Office anticipations included an assortment of political forces, made up of the parties in contest and a variety of independents, devoid of a real political centre of gravity. This lack of consensus among the disparate entities would have permitted HMG's administration, both in the colony and in London to identify and select choice candidates for political grooming. It would also have afforded HMG time to ameliorate the socio-economic deformations in the colony.⁵⁷ This had now proven a miscalculation.

British sources show that members of the cabinet admitted harbouring a pre-election fear of the PPP because of its better organisation, political commitment and rapport with the working peoples, but even so they had not anticipated that this popular

⁵⁵ This is reported in 74ID.00/5-2853, Margaret Joy Tebbitts, Second Secretary, London to The Department of State, No. 5080, 29 May 1953. See also, CO. 111/812/1 Colonial Office discussion of the Waddington Commission Report. 3 August 1951. (Documentation on a definitive British reaction to the electoral victory of the PPP has not been found).

⁵⁶ Ibid. See also, Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research Report, No. 6292, 27 May 1953.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

appeal could have transformed the political realities of British Guiana in so decisive a manner in so short a time.⁵⁸

It is very important to present the results as they were perceived by the British. In the first place, the results surpassed the wildest predictions of all the pundits. As a result one party had achieved an overwhelming majority in the Legislative Council and as a consequence in the Executive Council as well. This reflected the unity of the colonial dispossessed, especially the Blacks and East Indians, a factor with potent implications for the legislative programme of the PPP.⁵⁹ This factor took on special significance since the PPP, and particularly the Jagans, were opposed to certain aspects of the socio-economic formation in the colony and had consistently demanded urgent reforms.⁶⁰ Their attitude to colonial capital in particular created considerable unease within the ranks of the expatriate managers of the colonial economy and explained their

⁵⁸ CO. 1031/118 Prime Minister to Secretary of State, 2 May 1953, and Secretary of State to the Prime Minister, 5 May 1953.

⁵⁹ Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research Report, No. 6292, 27 May 1953. See also, 74ID.00/5-453. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 239, 4 May 1953.

⁶⁰ See Motions from Jagan for "Minimum wage in all industries employing more than ten persons"; "Taxing lands controlled by the sugar industry"; "Extending the provisions of the Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Ordinance to the Sugar industry"; "To make provision for the Housing of workers on the sugar estates"; "To negotiate with the SPA for freehold land for house construction"; "Machinery for the settlement of jurisdictional disputes in the labour movement" and "The withdrawal of leases issued for lands not beneficially occupied or an increase in rentals charged for them" MEC, 13 October 1951; 4 July 1951; 16 January 1951; 25 April 1951; 5 July 1951; MLA., 13 June 1952; 31 July 1952 and 22 May 1951 respectively.

fear of the PPP and as a consequence, their opposition to that party.⁶¹

Another worrying feature was the fact that influential elements in the party were influenced by Marxist philosophy. They were militantly anti-colonial and had campaigned for immediate self-government. Few doubted that HMG's policy of gradual socio-economic and constitutional development would be seriously challenged.⁶²

Yet for all of this, British reactions to the victory of the PPP, except for those of the Prime Minister, were not as gloomy as those of the Americans.⁶³ Especially within the Colonial Office, where remnants of the Labour's liberalism still prevailed, officers did not consider that all had been lost. They maintained that it was still possible to contain the threat posed by the PPP.⁶⁴ Internally the Governor's reserve powers were considerable and more than equal to the task of containing any

⁶¹ See pp. 153-154 and fns. 27-33 above.

⁶² PREM. 11/827, Secretary of State to The Prime Minister, 5 May 1953.

⁶³ PRO-PREM, 11/827, Churchill to Secretary of State, 2 May 1953 in which he queried whether, "We ought surely to get American support in doing all we can to break the communist teeth in British Guiana." To which Lyttelton counselled "Restraint and vigilance." Ibid., Secretary of State to Prime Minister, 5 May 1953.

⁶⁴ 74ID.00/5-2853. Tebbitts to The Department of State, No. 5080, 29 May 1953. The Secretary of State was himself less revealing. Publicly, at least, both the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister adopted a neutral response to the results and advocated a wait and see policy. PREM. 11/827, Secretary of State to Prime Minister, 5 May 1953 and HCD, 515, 6 May 1953. 366-367.

unreasonable behaviour on the part of that party. Additionally the State Council already possessed powers capable of delaying any government bill for a period of up to six months. This organ could also reject any bill it considered ill advised or inappropriate. At the regional level, the Party was committed to the federal idea and it was hoped that in moving into the Caribbean, the leadership of the PPP would accept the moderating influences of other West Indian leaders such as Adams and Bustamante. The third aspect of British strategy rested on the fact that Latin America had not been particularly receptive to Communist organisations in the past. The victory of the PPP might influence optimism among communist groups, but there was nothing to suggest that it would necessarily reverse Latin American inhospitality to communist organisations.

American sources subsequently considered two other possibilities. The first was the fragility of the PPP leadership, which seemed likely to split. This came to light almost immediately after the victory. Just prior to the election there were rumours of an attempted split in the leadership of the party which had barely been weathered in time for the polls.⁶⁵ The events of "crisis week" immediately after the elections, when there was a serious struggle between Jagan and Burnham for the leadership of the

⁶⁵ 74ID.00/5-1253. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 239, 4 May 1953 and Jagan, The West On Trial, 116-118.

party, lent credence to the earlier rumour and gave considerable heart to the opposition, Whitehall and the Americans.⁶⁶

The second was the possibility of fashioning a viable opposition out of the disparate forces which had opposed the PPP at the polls. This had been a pre-election hope which had borne no fruit but assumed greater urgency now that the PPP had won the election.⁶⁷

In the meantime, the Americans hoped that "responsibility may sober and educate Jagan". This hope was based on the perceived evolution of Kwame Nkrumah, as a nationalist leader capable of being led a by strong Governor. In the circumstances it was hoped that Jagan would turn out to be an Nkrumah type nationalist leader rather than a genuine communist.⁶⁸

The most comprehensive analysis of the election results and their implications came from the Americans.⁶⁹ This was in itself a

⁶⁶ 74ID.00/5-453. Maddock to The Department of State, No. 239, 4 May 1953 and The Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research Report, No. 6292, 27 May 1953.

⁶⁷ 74ID.00/5-453. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 239, 4 May 1953 and Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research, No. 6292, 27 May 1953. See also, CO. 1031/121, Luke to Rogers 12 September 1953 (Secret and Personal) Ibid., Savage to Lloyd, 12 September 1953.

⁶⁸ 74ID.00/5-2853. Tebbitts (London) to The Department of State, No.3080, 29 May 1953.

⁶⁹ In general the American reports were very comprehensive, some running into several pages. They included information collected from the press, Officials, the managers of Colonial capital, and diplomats serving in the region and in Britain. But the most expressive comment was brief and to the point, PPP victory worries us. They were so concerned that a senior

significant factor. For some time the Americans had been keeping very close watch over the development of party politics in Guiana. In recent years this surveillance had intensified in response to the activities of the labour movement and the PAC.⁷⁰ By the time the PPP was established the Americans had become concerned about the potential for the evolution of a communist movement in Guiana.⁷¹ The Americans assessed all Caribbean personnel in terms of whether they were anti- or pro-American in sentiments. Interestingly enough, Jagan was assessed as pro-American in 1947 *when* there was no mention of his alleged communist leanings.⁷² Since then however, with the increasing popularity of the PAC and the PPP and the definition of the party's anti-colonial programme, the Americans had come to perceive Jagan with less enthusiasm.⁷³

diplomat was detailed to travel to Guiana to cover the situation. 74ID.00/5-1453. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 257, 14 May 1953.

⁷⁰ 844B. 504/6-1749. The Department of State to American Consul, Georgetown, A-23, 17 June 1949.

⁷¹ See for instance, 94ID. 64/3-1852, T.E.Burke, American Vice Consul, (AVC) Georgetown. to The Department of State, No. 118, 18 March 52.

⁷² 844B. 504/6-2749. Skora to The Department of State, No. 76, 29 December 1947

⁷³ In a report on the 1953 election, they said that in the beginning, Jagan appeared to be an impressionable youth dominated and tutored into Marxist doctrine by his wife. Subsequently, he developed into a blatant Communist propagandist and professional organiser. See Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research Report, No. 6292, 27 May 1953. The Robertson Commission Report concluded that Dr. Jagan did not become a convinced communist until his visit to Europe in the Summer of 1951, some eighteen months after the formation of the PPP. p. 30, para. 102.

American interest in the Caribbean was initially defined in the nineteenth century by plans to build a Central American canal to provide military and commercial ships access to the Pacific. The 1823 Monroe Doctrine as interpreted by the 1904 Roosevelt Corollary was applied almost exclusively to the Caribbean. Between 1904 and 1936, when Franklin Roosevelt replaced Theodore Roosevelt's interventionist corollary with the non-interventionist Good Neighbour Policy, the United States intervened frequently in the Caribbean, principally, in defence of economic interests. In the Cold War period after World War II, the United States used military force as an instrument of political policy on at least 217 occasions.⁷⁴ More than one fourth of these events took place in the Caribbean region largely to impede the coming to power of presumably hostile leftist governments. In some other cases, diplomatic pressure and covert action have proven just as useful. The case of British Guiana falls neatly into this period and into this latter category.⁷⁵

American interest in the Guiana was a part of its overall specific interests in the Caribbean region and its general interests in Latin America. American security concerns account for the intensity of this interest but economic self interests should not be underestimated. Traditionally, security interests have been dominated by a concern to maintain a strategic balance

⁷⁴ For an informative discussion on the topic, see B.M. Blechman and S.S. Kaplan, Force with War: US Armed Forces as a Political Instrument, (Washington: 1978)

⁷⁵ William Blum, The CIA: A Forgotten History, (London: 1986), discusses forty nine case studies.

of power between the Western democratic system in which American capitalism flourishes and international communism which allegedly threatens the existence of both.⁷⁶ In this strategic security context the Caribbean has historically been a very sensitive area.⁷⁷

The Caribbean represents the southern flank of the United States-its strategic rear, and it has traditionally been defined as the region of highest US security concern in the hemisphere. It has been argued that the principal American interest in the area has been to maintain its unchallenged and unrestrained freedom of movement or activity throughout the region. In this therefore the principal threat to its hegemony and security was the emergence of governments likely to provide bases from which the enemies of the United States, international communism, might conceivably operate to constrain US freedom of access throughout the region.⁷⁸

In addition, the Caribbean is an area of important economic interests; it provides a number of critical raw materials for the

⁷⁶ For a discussion of the American and the opposing Latin American view see, G.P. Atkins, "Mutual Security in the Changing Inter-American System: An Appraisal of the OAS Charter and Rio Treaty Revisions" (Carlisle Barracks, 1977) and William Perry, "US Security and the Western Hemisphere" Daniel McMichael and John Paulus, Western Hemisphere Stability-The Latin American Connection, (Pittsburgh: 1983), pp. 113-135.

⁷⁷ For obvious reasons this concern was enhanced with the construction of the inter-oceanic canal and the successful Cuban Revolution. Cohen, pp. 226-229.

⁷⁸ "Mutual Security and Common Stake" Report of the Security Panel, McMichael and Paulus, pp. 77-93.

American economy and tranships the bulk of US petroleum imports. It also is the main source of American raw materials import in the Western Hemisphere. Mexico is the United States' second most important supplier of critical raw materials after Canada, and the principal supplier of silver, zinc, gypsum, antimony, mercury, bismuth, selenium, barium, rhenium, and lead. Mexico could supply up to 30 percent of US petroleum import requirements and up to 2 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day. Venezuela provided 10 percent of US iron ore imports and about 30 percent of its petroleum import requirements. Refineries in the Caribbean, especially, the Antilles, supply over 50 percent of US petroleum products from crude imported from the Middle East and Africa. In good times, nearly 30 percent of US bauxite imports came from Jamaica. Only Guiana and Surinam, alternately, provided a greater percentage of US imports of this strategic raw material. No other region in the Western Hemisphere, except Canada, is as important to the US supply of raw materials, and many of these important suppliers are, from the American viewpoint, countries susceptible to political instability. Additionally, since the construction of the Panama Canal, the Caribbean, has been the principal route of commercial and naval traffic between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. US interests in the Caribbean were, to a large extent therefore, defined by the region's importance in the supply of raw materials to the United States itself and by the gateway to the Atlantic Ocean.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ International Economic Studies Institute, (IESI). Raw Materials and Foreign Policy, (Washington: 1952), pp. 44-61.

The Caribbean was also a critical link in a number of military activities that serve US global defence purposes but as an ocean region, the Caribbean was perceived by Washington as inherently vulnerable to external penetration. This concern about penetration was intensified after political developments in Cuba between 1960 and 1963, the Cuban military build up and subsequently the Cuban concession of basing privileges to the Soviet blue water fleet. As far as Washington is concerned it was imperative that The Caribbean region remain secure for the transit of American vessels and that security was largely dependent on the quality of political relations that Washington established and maintained with Caribbean regimes in political and economic transition and which were therefore assessed as relatively unpredictable.⁸⁰

Because the Caribbean, as a region, is economically the poorest and politically the most unstable in the hemisphere, Washington has traditionally feared that political disaffection would offer a base for the expansion of communist activities encouraging regional instability and promoting the emergence of anti-American regimes.⁸¹ Because the region is within America's historical sphere of influence, any threat to America's preeminence in the region or challenge to its ability to deny the region to other powers was interpreted, in the Senate and the State Department, as a sign of American weakness capable of undermining its

⁸⁰ A.F. Lowenthal, "The United States and Latin America: Ending the Hegemonic Presumption" Foreign Affairs, LV, I, (October 1976). 199-213.

⁸¹ Ibid.

hegemony in the Western hemisphere. It is for this reason that anti-Americanism in the region has always posed a major test of US tolerance for political experimentation, especially by radical nationalists and any challenge to the concept of hemispheric solidarity.⁸²

For all these reasons, a key goal of American security policy has been to deny access in the region to hostile foreign powers or radical political regimes that would challenge Washington's interests in the region. In these circumstances Washington's reaction to the radical nationalism and communist rhetoric of the PPP was automatic.

The Americans readily attributed the emergence of radical anti-colonial forces to the malformations endemic to the colony and blamed HMG's economic and constitutional policies for the growing discontent of all Caribbean peoples.⁸³ Indeed, they were convinced that the widespread neglect and unbridled exploitation of colonial capitalism in the region made anti-colonial sentiments unavoidable. There were even times when the Americans seemed sympathetic to the development of such movements in the

⁸² Ibid. and S.D. Krasner, Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and US Foreign Policy, (Princeton: 1978), pp. 162-182.

⁸³ The Taussig Commission Report 1942. The Taussig Papers, (FDRL). Howard Johnson, 181.

region and used then as the excuse for American intrusion and effective cover for American capital penetration.⁸⁴

To the Americans, Guiana was a particularly sensitive area. The American Consul in Trinidad observed that while politically Guiana was located in the Caribbean region, geographically it was located on the South American continent, and as such, developments in that colony had repercussions in the rest of the hemisphere. He noted that the region was of "vital strategic importance" to the United States, in that, the islands guarded the eastern approaches to the Panama Canal. The United States had defence bases on several of the islands, including Antigua, Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Lucia and the Turks and Caicos, which in itself reflected the strategic importance of the region in the military reckoning of the United States. Some of the surrounding areas were important sources of strategic raw materials: bauxite (Surinam and Jamaica), oil (Venezuela and Trinidad) and wood (British Honduras).

Guiana was of special moment since the colony bordered a very important bauxite location in Surinam, oil in Trinidad and Venezuela and was itself the location of the most important American bauxite industry in the Caribbean. Guiana was also considered a potential source of petroleum. In the circumstances the PPP victory was "especially significant" as it was "expected

⁸⁴ FO. 953-1529, J.H.A.Watson, British Embassy Washington, to R.H.K.Maret, Foreign Office Information Policy Department, 4 February 1954. Enclosure, Record of Meeting (Secret) between the USIA and UK Embassy Staff concerned with Latin America Affairs, 14 January 1954.

to have repercussions in other British colonies in the Caribbean, especially British Honduras, Jamaica, and possibly Trinidad", where pro-marxist organisations were already the source of American concerns.⁸⁵ As a consequence of the PPP victory and its control of the constitutional organs in the colony the general tenor of anti-colonial resistance to widespread economic underdevelopment and social squalor was bound to gain momentum.

The American Embassy in London was therefore unhappy over the response of some London newspapers to the victory. The Daily Worker, for instance, carried an assessment from the Communist Party which coincided much too closely with American fears,

The splendid victory of the People's Progressive Party in the recent elections is an expression of the rapid growth of the national movement fighting for freedom and independence. This will stimulate the whole fight throughout the West Indies.⁸⁶

The cogency of this appraisal derived from "The low living of the mass of people in these territories (which) makes them particularly susceptible to communist propaganda."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ 74ID.00/5-153. Internal Memorandum, Mr. Raynor, Bureau of Latin America and the West Indies, Department of State to Mr. Merchant, Bureau Of European Affairs, 1 May 1953.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Tebbitts, to The Department of State, No. 5355, 7 May 1953.

⁸⁷ Ibid., Raynor, The Department of State to Mr Merchant, 1 May 1953.

Constitutional devolution in those circumstances was perceived as having an added problem, since liberal advances, which might in other cases served to defuse colonial tension now "provide opportunities for the assumption of power by communist-dominated and radical groups."⁸⁸

The British, as were their custom, the American Head of Section for Latin America and the West Indies reported, were offering too little too late and in the circumstances, were aggravating rather than alleviating tensions and consequently, increasing American anxieties in the region. They were concerned that the PPP, a known communist organisation, was allowed to maintain close contact with the Communist Party in the United Kingdom and to be well funded from outside sources.⁸⁹ He complained that the Party had set up a Pioneer Youth Movement and a Peace Committee and had sent representatives to various communist-inspired gatherings behind the Curtain.⁹⁰ What was more the party openly employed communist rhetoric and slogans and advocated the setting up of an independent socialist state within the framework of the Commonwealth. The victory of the PPP was significant enough to warrant the urgent establishment of a branch of the United States Information Service in the region to intensify the propaganda war against communism.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

An American intelligence report on the election was even more pessimistic about the results.

The sweeping victory of the Communist-led People's Progressive Party (PPP) in the British Guiana general elections of April 27 is a serious blow to US and British interests in the region.⁹²

This report referred to a serious miscalculation on the part of British policy makers, in which it was

anticipated that a coalition of moderates would be able to hold office while the party system solidified and the leaders became more experienced in administration.

They were irritated that because of the miscalculation the American economic and strategic interests in the region were threatened. For with the PPP in office "freedom for communist activity will be treated as an integral part of the PPP's civil rights program." But perhaps the most distressing feature of the victory was the fact that "levies on big foreign companies will be popular within the party."

The report concluded by listing five possibilities. In the first place, now that it was in office the party enjoyed a strategic advantage which it would use to entrench itself politically in the colony and to spread communist and anti-American ideas throughout the region. Secondly the victory afforded Caribbean communists such as John Rojas of Trinidad and Richard Hart of

⁹² Ibid., The Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research Report, No. 6292, 27 May 1953.

Jamaica, to continue their policies and expand their activities in an effort to emulate the success of the PPP. Thirdly, it was felt that the election results were particularly ill-timed, because the recent spate of constitutional devolution apart, illiteracy, under-employment, low production, poverty, and the immaturity of labour unions and political parties combined with the recent spate of constitutional reforms had aggravated regional instability, giving the communists a popular front and numerous opportunities to infiltrate local organisations. Fourthly, the economic development of the colony would be furthered retarded since foreign capital would most likely become apprehensive and industrial relations deteriorate. This would destabilise the colony and provoke even more extreme behaviour from the PPP. It did, however, end on an optimistic note by predicting that the federal movement would benefit since the PPP supported the federal idea.

Jagan, in attempting to relieve the tension which the victory of his party caused both at home and abroad, seems to have aggravated old fears. He denied the allegation that the PPP was a communist party but then admitted that the party was,

militant, extremely militant. We are not the usual run of the mill Socialist group. We make demands. We picket. We don't just sit around. We don't go along with the Tories or the Socialists, so they called us Communist.⁹³

⁹³ 74ID.00/5-753. Tebbitts to The Department of State, No. 5355, 7 May 1953, Enclosure No. 1, The Daily Express, 5 May 1953.

If the idea had been to win over the enemy this latter admission would have defeated the purpose. In another interview Jagan outlined the strategy of the party he led to victory and once again aggravated those fears.

It will uncompromisingly fight against imperialism and colonial oppression and will support with all its power the international working class and the national liberation movements of all countries dominated and run for the benefit of alien interests.⁹⁴

It was an early setback for any British or American hope of converting the PPP to a policy of incremental development but what was even more disturbing was the commitment of an elected government to support anti-imperialism in the region. The Americans might have been persuaded to accept the legitimacy of a democratically elected left wing government in the region, as difficult as this would have been, but it was impossible to persuade them to accept any government in the region which advocated support for the forces of anti-imperialism. Such a statement caused Whitehall additional moments of worry but the Americans felt justified in adopting any policy aimed at destabilising such a government.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Ibid., Enclosure No. 2, The Daily Worker, 30 April 1953.

⁹⁵ SC, No. 00694/53B, Special Report on British Guiana. Copy 1. CIA: Office of Current Intelligence, May 1953 and 74ID.00/8-2053, Robert F. Caldwell to Department of State, 19 August 1953.

Immediately after its victory the PPP experienced its first crisis when the leadership of the PPP quarrelled over the spoils of victory. Forbes Burnham found it difficult to contain his ambitions and immediately challenged Cheddi Jagan for the leadership of the party. After a week of intense party squabbling the issue was resolved in Jagan's favour but at the cost of a ministerial position to Janet Jagan. The post was given instead to Jai Narine Singh, whom Jagan would later describe as a political personality of unknown potential and questionable loyalty. Jai Narine Singh, a barrister and executive member of the BGEIA, Jagan believed had joined the PPP because he felt that the chances of enhancing his personal ambition could better be assured within the party.⁹⁶

The leadership dispute revealed antagonistic cleavages within the party which would later become the target of inducements from the forces opposed to the party and government.⁹⁷ Finally, the incident also produced the first fracture within the party when Clinton Wong tendered his resignation and accused a section of the party's leadership of being communists.⁹⁸ Almost immediately thereafter, a section of the Georgetown constituency of the party lodged a similar protest to the secretary.⁹⁹ These developments and their implications were not lost on the British ruling class

⁹⁶ Jagan, The West On Trial, 118.

⁹⁷ Interview with Jagan, 14 May 1987. See also below Chapter Seven.

⁹⁸ 74ID.00/5-2953. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 269, 29 May 1953.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

or the Americans. It was what they had hoped for and when it appeared they were not reluctant to recognise its true potential.

Having weathered the inner turmoil, the party decided on its nominees for the various positions in the legislature and the Governor was able to announce the composition of the Government.¹⁰⁰ The Executive Council was a keen balance of several antagonistic forces. In the first place there were the three ex-officios and the Minister without Portfolio, whose existence in the House the party had protested against in the past. However together with the Governor, this section represented a vote of five in an eleven member Council and as such did not represent an immediate threat unless the Governor chose to exercise his reserve powers. But the PPP was also angry because the three ex-officios, between them monopolised the important portfolios of foreign and commonwealth affairs, police, defence, finance, and law and order which it was argued could "not be transferred with confidence to the elected Ministers".¹⁰¹

The membership of the State Council provided an extremely worrying point for the PPP. There was McDavid, Financial Secretary in the 1947 government who was a sound and

¹⁰⁰ MLC. 17 June 1953; 74ID.00/5-2953. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 269. 29 May 1953; CO. 1031/281/1953. Savage to Secretary of State, No. 217, 22 May 1953 and Secretary of State to The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8 June 1953.

¹⁰¹ The Waddington Report 1951, p. 28, para. 102.

knowledgeable colonial civil servant. But for all of this he was conservative and proud of it. Raatgever had served as a nominated member in both the past governments. Like others in commerce he found it profitable to maintain a clientage relationship with Sugar which he served with singular loyalty on the Chamber of Commerce and other committees.¹⁰² He never deluded himself about his chances with the polls and so depended upon the Governor and the influence of Sugar for political patronage.

Lionel Luckhoo, a member of the Luckhoo dynasty, legal luminaries of international repute, had acquired a distasteful reputation, for having been given a place on the former legislature ahead of a **bona fide** representative of the rice industry following the death of Cramat Ali McDoom. McDoom's appointment clearly indicated the intention of the colonial authorities to reward the RMB with a voice in what some continued to perceive as an important decision making body in the colony.¹⁰³ It was felt that Luckhoo's appointment violated this earlier undertaking.¹⁰⁴ Upon acceding to that high office, Luckhoo wasted little time in acquiring regional notoriety by piloting the infamous Subversive Literature Bill, which purported to protect the Guianese reading

¹⁰² MLC, 13 April 1951 and CO. 111/809/2. W.A.MacNie (Managing Director, SPA) to Hon. D.J.Parkinson, (Actg.), Colonial Secretary, British Guiana), 22 April 1951.

¹⁰³ CO. 111/809/1. 1950. Colonial, Office Internal Memorandum, D.F.Smith to Secretary of State, 16 November 1950.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Colonial Note by W.D.Sweaney, 22 November 1950. See also Woolley to Secretary of State, No. 80, 6 October 1950; No. 477, 29 October 1950 and No. 95, 4 November 1950.

public from the evil effects of communist literature.¹⁰⁵ Luckhoo was also president of the MPCA.

Macnie was a former Colonial Secretary who had served in the Leeward Islands after first serving as principal assistant Colonial Secretary in the colony. He had also been in the local police force and had achieved the ranks of District Inspector, District Commissioner and Senior District Commissioner in a force which had acquired the reputation of functioning for the protection of expatriate economic enterprise and in which Imperial awards could be won for shooting colonial working people. Since leaving the colonial service Macnie had been in the employ of the SPA and had as a consequence been one of their instruments in the local legislature.

Rahaman Gajraj was a successful East Indian businessman with a respectable following in the East Indian middle class. He was a political unknown, with little on which to judge him. But because he was a member of the local middle class and a substantial land owner, he disagreed with several aspects of the PPP's policies.¹⁰⁶

Allan John Knight, the Anglican Arch-Bishop of the West Indies, was an independent thinker, who was known to supported working

¹⁰⁵ MLC, 20 February 1952, 13 March 1952 and 14 March 1953 and 94ID. 64/3152. Burke to The State Department, No., 118, 18 March 1952.

¹⁰⁶ Interestingly enough, Gajraj displayed considerable private enthusiasm for the programme of the PPP. Spinner, p. 42.

class interests on a number of contentious issues in the past. As leader of the Anglican church he had been expected to become party to the anti-communist campaign led by the Church, but had succeeded in standing aloof.¹⁰⁷ His was a position of principle, and while not reluctant to attack communism, he felt that the Church should not abuse its influence.¹⁰⁸ It was however widely believed that he was opposed to the PPP's stand on education in Guiana.¹⁰⁹

The Policies and Actions of the PPP Government

In spite of the mandate they received from the electorate, the PPP took office confident that they would be opposed in their efforts to reform the socio-economic structures of the colony. However, they immediately gave their opponents an emotional issue around which to rally when they refused to move the vote of affirmation signalling their loyalty to the Crown.¹¹⁰ Even if their loyalty could be taken for granted and their opponents did not feel that it could, their reluctance provided the conservatives with a cause for which they no doubt hoped. When this motion was subsequently tabled by the opposition no member of the PPP voted against it, but the fact that they had refused

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Jagan. 14 May 1987.

¹⁰⁸ The Governor reported that the Bishop had preached a strong sermon against communism. CO. 537/4880, Woolley to Secretary of State, 13 June 1949.

¹⁰⁹ The Daily Argosy, 16 June 1953.

¹¹⁰ MHA, 17 June 1953.

to move the motion was important to those looking for an opening from which to launch an attack.¹¹¹

The second issue on which the opposition was given an opportunity to make capital was similarly sensitive. The government rejected a motion to have Guiana represented in Jamaica during a stopover visit of the recently crowned monarch.¹¹² It was of little consequence that the PPP opposed on a point of principle.¹¹³ In dire need of development funding, the colony had already allocated a large sum, variously estimated at between \$50,000 and \$100,000, for the royal coronation celebration in Guiana and to have Guiana represented at the Coronation ceremony in London.¹¹⁴ The party now felt and argued that the colony could ill afford to expend further sums to send representatives to see the Queen in Jamaica.¹¹⁵ This might have been popular politics but it was conceivably a diplomatic blunder particularly as some Members were able to recall that in 1950 the party had similarly been critical of the budget for the visit of HRH Princess Alice. On that occasion it was also rumoured that the party had arranged

¹¹¹ The matter received wide and hostile coverage in the local press of the 18-21 June 1953 but when the Motion was finally debated the PPP supported it. MEC, 28 August 1953.

¹¹² MEC, 14 and 28 July 1953 and MHA, 24 July, 28 August and 10 September 1953.

¹¹³ It is apposite to note that the item discussed immediately before the Queen's visit to Jamaica had produced considerable problems in raising \$17,000 to finance repairs to a breach in the sea-defence dam at Pln Leonora. MEC, 14 July 1953.

¹¹⁴ MEC, 13 January 1953.

¹¹⁵ MHA, 10 September 1953 and MSC, 10 and 17 August 1953.

for an electrical outage during the civic reception in her honour.¹¹⁶ The plan was betrayed and the embarrassment averted.¹¹⁷ As it was the opposition found an issue which commanded a ready audience at home and abroad.¹¹⁸ Chase subsequently argued that the debate came too close to their refusal to move the loyalty vote and as a consequence the opposition, in the house and the press restricted the debate to an anti-monarchy issue to the exclusion of all other relevant issues.¹¹⁹

Conservative elements were also offended by the repeal of two ordinances enacted by the previous government.¹²⁰ Dr Jagan had voted against both and in his speech opposing the motions had undertaken to repeal them once the party had gained power.¹²¹ The repeals could not have been a surprise. They had featured prominently in the party's election manifesto and had been frequently discussed during the campaign.¹²² The Undesirable Literature Ordinance 1952 was directed against communist

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ CO. 537/6115, Woolley to Secretary of State, 27 April 1950.

¹¹⁸ 74ID. 00/3851. Burke to The Department of State, No. 1951; Chase, 48-49 and The Robertson Report 1954, 54-55, paras. 158-60.

¹¹⁹ Chase, 49.

¹²⁰ MEC, 23 June and 2 and 7 July 1953 and MHA, 24 July and 29 September 1953.

¹²¹ MLC, 13 and 14 March 1953; CO. 1031/776. OAG., John Gutch to Secretary of State, No. 230, 13 March 1953.

¹²² The Election Manifesto of the PPP 1953; The Robertson Report 1954, and Chase, 51-53.

literature and during the course of the debate in the legislature it was made obvious that it was aimed at the PPP.¹²³ Dr Jagan had challenged the earliest discussion on such a motion. He expressed concern that the colonial administration was seeking power to intercept and seize private mail.¹²⁴ This challenge had merely precipitated the passage of the bill and there was a fear that he was even now bent on revenge for literature seized from him.

The second ordinance, "The Removal of Restrictions on Entry into British Guiana, 1953" which they repealed had deemed Caribbean thinkers and activists as undesirables just as HMG was attempting to achieve political integration in the region.¹²⁵ The legislation struck a very sensitive chord in the PPP. There was, of course, the abhorrence of persecution of Caribbean nationalists for their political beliefs.¹²⁶ But additionally, both Cheddi and Janet Jagan had themselves been refused entry to a number of Caribbean territories.¹²⁷ Cheddi Jagan had been

¹²³ CO. 1031/776, OAG to Secretary of State, No. 230, 13 March 1953.

¹²⁴ MEC, 18 March and 19 August 1952.

¹²⁵ MEC, 30 June and 7 and 14 July 1953; 74ID. 00/7-1653. Maddox to The Department of State, No. 7, 10 July 1953.

¹²⁶ Chase, 53-54.

¹²⁷ CO. 537/4905/71001/248. Conditions of Landing on St. Vincent - re-Janet Jagan.
Woolley to Governor, Windward Islands, No. 46, 4 February 49. (Secret);
R.D.H.Arundell to the Governor, British Guiana, No. 90, 9 February 1949. (Secret);
Woolley to Secretary of State, 7 February 1949; Woolley to Sir George Seal, 16 February 1949 and MEC, 5 February, 24 April; 29 July and 28 October 1952.

banned while a member of the colonial legislature and his wife while a member of the Georgetown City Council. On the other hand six West Indian political personalities, Ferdinand Smith, William Strachan and Richard Hart of Jamaica and John Rojas, John LaRose and Quentin O'Conner of Trinidad, had been banned from entering Guiana.¹²⁸

Banning enjoyed considerable currency among those who would legislate against the ideas held by their opponents. In Guiana, the leaders of the PPP and the GIWU were restrained from entering on the property of the sugar companies. This ban, introduced in early 1948, was not waived until after the general election, when several of the banned members became ministers in the government.¹²⁹

These four incidents taken together gave the conservatives a platform from which to launch their attack against the PPP Ministers. The government's record was no less abrasive in their view when they considered some of the other matters it had reviewed after only five months in office. Committees were set up to undertake a survey of retail price structure in the colony;¹³⁰ to advise on the fishing industry, to investigate the most effective means of introducing machine pools for small farmers; to review the pay structures of domestic servants, building trades workers, cinema, hire-car chauffeurs, sawmill

¹²⁸ MEC, 16 December 1952.

¹²⁹ The Daily Argosy, 10 June 1953.

¹³⁰ MEC, 9 September 1953.

workers, factory watchmen and medical employees;¹³¹ to reorganise the structure, function and priorities of the Central Planning and Housing Authority; to revise the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance and the shift system under which both firemen and seamen were employed; to devise the means through which the state could benefit from the introduction of a system of State Lotteries;¹³² to review the system of promotions in the colony, especially as this pertained to the nursing profession, junior ranks of the civil service and police force.¹³³

At the same time a number of issues had passed through the committee stages and the necessary ordinances were in various stages of preparation. These included, a National Labour Board for compulsory arbitration; a tax ordinance to recoup greater revenue from the mineral resources of the colony; increased prices for farmers' produce; the introduction of a Broadcast to Schools programme; the abolition of the preparatory forms in secondary schools; an increase in the number of scholarships granted annually to Guianese scholars of school leaving age, and the abolition of dual control in the education system.¹³⁴

While each of these created new areas of grievances for various sections of the opposition, it was the Government's focus on the education system which had the greatest emotional content. The

¹³¹ Ibid., 23 June 1953; 7, 14 and 21 July 1953.

¹³² MHA, 18 June 1953.

¹³³ MEC, 21 and 28 July and 5 August 1953.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 5 August and 29 September 1953 and Chase, 38-46.

government was attempting to coordinate the system of education under the central direction of an agency accountable to Ministry of Education and in so doing reduce the control which the Church had for more than a century exercised in the system.¹³⁵ This was a process begun under the previous administration, on the recommendation of at least two committees set up for this purpose. Opposition to the PPP's move stemmed from the fear that the government was intent on replacing religious education with the teaching of communism in the classroom.

The weaknesses of the old system of education were numerous and in dire need of reform. This had been exposed by successive reports. The first had been as early as 1925 while the last was presented in 1952.¹³⁶ Additionally, the old arrangement could no longer afford to maintain itself and needed extra Government funding. The problem was that while government voted a sizeable proportion of the budget for the system, the Church, by insisting that only christians could be employed and promoted was discriminating against a large section of the Guianese population.¹³⁷ This was a contentious issue which the Church was

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ "Education Commissioners' Report", Sessional Paper, No, 24 1926 MCC, 4 of 1926, 1 April 1926 and "The Report of the Primary Education Policy Committee", MEC, 16 September 1952.

¹³⁷ MEC, 5 August and 29 September 1953; Chase, 38-46. This policy was strictly adhered to by the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Methodist denominations. Other denominations such as the Lutherans pursued a similar policy but because they catered almost exclusively to the East Indian community, they were accepted as East Indian churches and did not incur the same degree of animosity.

wary of giving way since it represented a significant pillar of its authority structure and would curtail its ability to dispense patronage.

Given the political role adopted by the Church in both the 1947 and the 1953 elections and its opposition to the PPP, the Church no doubt felt it had reasonable cause to expect a political backlash and identified the vigorous prosecution of the government's programme as the government's response. It therefore chose to launch another campaign, this time based on what it interpreted as evidence of the communist infection of the education system.

Between May and October 1953 the government negotiated better treatment of Guianese fishermen from the Government of Surinam; increased royalties on a proposed hydro-electric project; revised fees paid to medical practitioners; agreed on a more acceptable system of promotion for certain categories of public servants in the colony¹³⁸ and the Government's right to have its nominees appointed to Boards and Committees.¹³⁹ Formerly, this was a privilege reserved for the middle class but the party had undertaken to change the pattern so as to give the ordinary man a say in some of the decisions that affected his every day existence.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 21 and 28 July; 25 August and 9 September 1953.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 29 May, 23 June, 2 July, 15 and 29 September 1953.

The government also undertook to scrutinise the disbursement of public funds especially to the Public Works Department, a step which raised the hackles of some members of the senior public service establishment, who may or may not have benefitted from an over-generous deployment of public funds.¹⁴⁰

The Government had also rejected two motions of considerable note. The first pertained to the payment of a salary to members of the State Council.¹⁴¹ The government took the position that since it had campaigned, and was still campaigning, against the existence of this body, then it could not properly support a bill making a part of its upkeep chargeable to the state. The second rejection concerned an application for the renewal of leases on crown lands to persons already in possession of large tracts of unproductively occupied lands.¹⁴² Specifically, two large landholders had their applications rejected. This refusal aggravated the concern of large landowners already fearful of the declarations made in the PPP election manifesto.

The subsequent legislative programme of the PPP nevertheless went further and provided the basis for a coalition of conservative opinion aimed at obtaining a retraction of the constitution which

¹⁴⁰ MEC, 16 June 1953.

¹⁴¹ MHA, 17, 18 and 25 June; 6 October 1953 and MEC, 16 June and 9 September 1953 and The Robertson Report 1954, 53-54, paras. 153-57.

¹⁴² Chase, 24. Jagan had attacked these leases during the life of the former Legislature, see MEC, 16 January; 22 May 1951; 22 and 29 April 1953. As a consequence the system was reviewed by a Committee which was about to present its report. MEC, 6 January and 18 June 1953.

they had feared and opposed from the very beginning. Yet the colonial legislation attempted by the party, because it did not effectively interfere with the colonial economy or the system of taxation, was not as drastic as might have been expected by the opposition. The government attempted to reform the local government system and prepared three draft bills, one to amend the Local Government Ordinance of 1945 and to effect transitional arrangements for local government election later in 1953. The local government system had languished for a long time under a congerie of nominated conservatives. The system had become unresponsive to local needs and a charge on the colonial administration.¹⁴³ Another aimed to amend the New Amsterdam Town Council Ordinance and to make transitional arrangements for election. The third ordinance sought to amend the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance and as in the case of the others to facilitate arrangements for elections later in the year.¹⁴⁴

The party was anxious to extend the principle of universal adult suffrage to local government but in doing so they threatened one

¹⁴³ MEC, 11 August 1953 and The Robertson Report 1954, 20-21, paras. 43-46 admits that the system had become unresponsive but using the figures for 1952 alone conveyed the impression that the system was entirely self financing. This was most certainly not the case. For instance the senior civil servants administering the system, all expatriates, were paid from central government and not from the local government revenue. For the most devastating denunciation of the system see, CO. 1031/121-1953. Political Situation in British Guiana. See note prepared by Savage, enclosed in Savage to Lloyd, 13 September 1955.

¹⁴⁴ MEC, 7 July and 11 August 1953.

of the few remaining political preserves of the conservatives.¹⁴⁵ The opposition was particularly offended by any attempt to democratise the Georgetown municipality and the PPP had earned the enmity of the influential urban conservative for attempting to do so in the past.¹⁴⁶ But even the colonial Governor was conscious that the times had changed.¹⁴⁷ The city council had been criticised for being a reserve in which the Georgetown business elite with pseudo-political aspirations retired safe from the hurly burly of real colonial politics.¹⁴⁸ It had resisted the encroachment of liberal politics and particularly rejected the introduction of universal adult suffrage.¹⁴⁹ The Georgetown business community perceived the attempted invasions as the end of an era and a special privilege and this was a serious challenge to both the Chamber of Commerce and the "light skinned" elite, who upheld the notion of the city as a commercial centre, whose existence depended on the successful conduct of commerce and whose institutions were there to service the commercial community. They therefore resisted any attempt to democratise this particular colonial institution.

¹⁴⁵ An earlier Motion by Jagan for the introduction of universal adult suffrage for municipal and district elections had been rejected. See, MEC, 11 March 1952

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ CO. 537/6115, Woolley to Secretary, 2 January 1951. For an American report on the same situation see, 741D. 00/12-950, Burke to The State Department, No. 74, 9 December 1950.

¹⁴⁸ PAC Bulletin, 15 January 1947; 11 June 1947 and 14 January 1948.

¹⁴⁹ The Thunder, 11 November 1950 and 3, 12 December 1952.

Another section of the society was offended by the Food Production (Rice Planting) Loans Bill and the Minister's Credit Bank (Amendment) Ordinance, new legislation which attempted to strengthen peasant agriculture development by providing the small farming community with \$50,000 in loans annually.¹⁵⁰ Limited as it was the bill struck a blow at middle-class usury. The rice industry had historically been capitalised by middle-class moneylenders who now saw their monopoly threatened.¹⁵¹

Apprehension was considerably heightened by the introduction of legislation to provide for a more efficient system of land tenure in the rice industry with the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance Amendment.¹⁵² This was an attempt to extend the acreage of cultivable land to the landless. The reforms contemplated were seen as threatening to the large holdings of the rural landlords who dominated the rice industry.¹⁵³ The bill also sought to provide protection for the 1953 Spring crop which was threatened by drought.¹⁵⁴

The existing ordinance the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance, No. 10 of 1945 was passed on 14 July 1945 and gave

¹⁵⁰ MEC, 23 June, 11 August and 12 September 1953; MHA, 24 and 29 September and 8 October 1953.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.; MHA, 27 September 1953.

¹⁵² MEC, 2 September 1953; MHA, 24 July and 29 September; Chase, 21-23 and The Robertson Commission Report 1954, 56-57, paras, 164-167.

¹⁵³ MLC, 4 September 1953; and MSC, 23 September 1953 and Jagan, The West On Trial, 121-22.

¹⁵⁴ MEC, 25 August 1953.

exclusive protection to the large landholders and disadvantaged the small tenant. The provisions which had come under attack by Jagan when the Ordinance came up for renewal in the former legislature made light of the tenant's right to litigation against the landholder for the violation of contractual agreements.¹⁵⁵ The amending bill provided for essential repairs or infra-structural works to be undertaken where landlords had been found to have been delinquent, and for the cost of such works to be credited to the accounts of the errant landlords. The reforms also proposed severe penalties for offending landlords.¹⁵⁶

These provisions outraged landholders and spurred them into alliances of convenience to protect their privileges. The act did not necessarily affect Sugar but the SPA seized the opportunity to cooperate with the landed bourgeoisie in protesting against the bill. The willingness of the SPA was no doubt motivated by the fact that Jagan had previously attacked Sugar for lands not beneficially occupied and the government had been having discussions with them about these lands¹⁵⁷ Using the considerable influence of former they attacked the bill as an

¹⁵⁵ MLC, 18 January, 22 and 29 April, 29 May and 13 June 1952. A specific motion from Jagan providing for compensation to tenants for breach of the agreement was rejected in April 1952. However in July his suggestion that the arrangement be investigated was referred to a committee of legislators. MEC, 22 April and 22 July 1952.

¹⁵⁶ MEC, 2 September 1953; MHA, 24 July and 29 September; Chase, 21-23 and The Robertson Report 1954, 56-57, paras, 164-167.

¹⁵⁷ MEC, 14 July and 11 August 1953.

invasion of the right to own private property. Together they were able to marshal enough credibility to have the bill rejected by the State Council.¹⁵⁸

The growing apprehension of capital was further aggravated by an attempt to ensure greater freedom for trade union organisation and representation, through the Trades Dispute (Essential Services) Repeal Bill 1953.¹⁵⁹ The original Trades Dispute (Essential Services) Ordinance 1942 was an emergency war measure which exercised a restraining influence on some services by denying them the right to participate in militant industrial action.¹⁶⁰

Moreover the measure had come to assume wider applicability than had been envisaged in the original bill. By the end of the war it applied in one form or the other to almost the entire labour force, but was still not repealed. It was therefore argued by the PPP that it had been kept on the books as a threat to labour for its infringement carried serious penalties. While there had been good grounds to tolerate these restrictions during the war, there were no such obligations in the years after the war especially as the declining earnings^{of} labour and the ongoing reluctance of the managers of industry to pay reasonable wages made militant industrial action unavoidable.

¹⁵⁸ MSC., 23 September 1953.

¹⁵⁹ MEC, 22 and 29 September; 5 and 7 October 1953; The Robertson Report 1954, 57-58, para. 168 and Chase, 14-15.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 18 March 1953.

Managers protested the repeal and ascribed it to the communist machinations of the government. The official section of the legislature despaired of their ability to keep the essential services functioning in the event of industrial action.¹⁶¹ Simultaneously, notice given by the Minister of Labour of an impending bill to regularise industrial disputes through the setting up of an arbitration tribunal created further tension within the managerial class. Managers feared that the ordinance would result in industrial instability and the eventual loss of effective control over their plant. This bill had its first reading in the House and was still to return to the Order Paper in October.¹⁶²

Undoubtedly the most controversial act by the PPP government in its short stay in office was the attempt to democratise trade union representation with the introduction of the Labour Relations Bill.¹⁶³ This bill attempted to simplify the system of union recognition in the colony. Additionally, it attempted to eradicate the practice of worker victimisation in the wake of an industrial dispute, and to formalise access of representatives of labour to the place of employment of their membership. The origin of this ordinance was to be found in the 1948 jurisdictional dispute between the MPCA and the GIWU which was

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 5 and 7 October 1953.

¹⁶² MHA, 24, 29 and 30 September; 1,2,5,7 and 8 October 1953 and The Robertson Report 1954, p. 58, para. 168.

¹⁶³ MEC, 15 September 1953. See The Robertson Report 1954, on this issue, 58-66 and Chase, 14-18. See also, CO. 1031/60-1951-53 for the official records and correspondence relative to this issue.

the main cause of the Enmore Strike and the subsequent banning of the leaders of the GIWU from several sugar estates affected by that dispute.

There was no disputing the necessity of some mechanism for resolving the jurisdictional conflict which had plagued the sugar industry since the 1948 dispute. But from the point of view of Sugar the bill was ominous. ^{SPA} The ^L was aware of the fact that the officially recognised union in the industry, the MPCA, had lost the confidence of its membership. Industrial relations within the industry had become increasingly unstable, a factor which resulted in lowered productivity and further loss of competitiveness. But the alternative to the MPCA was the militant GIWU which was controlled by the PPP, and Sugar was not prepared to deal with that union. This reluctance had made instability, a chronic feature within the industry, which Sugar with increasingly less conviction attributed to the rival union. The industry therefore resolved to dispute the bill's passage.¹⁶⁴

The position both for Sugar and the PPP was both dictated and complicated by global dislocations in the representation of labour which were reflected in the local contest.¹⁶⁵ In 1945, the British Guiana Trades Union Council (BGTUC) had joined the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). Established in 1945,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., Colonial Office internal memorandum by P Rogers, 11 September 1953 and Follett-Smith to Jock Campbell, 7 September 1953.

¹⁶⁵ Spinner, 40-42.

the latter was the only international trade union organisation and all the established trade unions sought to become affiliated. By 1949 the situation had become much more competitive. In that year trade unions in the western world, led by the British Trade Union Council (BTUC) and the American Regional Workers Organisation, seceded from the WFTU and established the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions(ICFTU). Labour organisations such as the British Guiana Trades Union Council were encouraged to follow the lead of the BTUC, but the BGTUC was reluctant to do so and this placed them beyond the sympathy of the great unions.¹⁶⁶

Conscious of its weak position in the colony and acceding to prompting from the SPA, the MPCA joined the ICFTU on its own and as a consequence immediately acquired the backing of the powerful and interventionist American and British trade union movement. The MPCA was perhaps also motivated to seek American fraternal support because it was gradually becoming isolated in the local trade union movement in Guiana, as its relations with the SPA led to its being deserted by its membership.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ This issue was most centrally located in Jamaica, where the political rivalry between the PNP and the JLP was acrimoniously contested in their labour organisations. Bustamante's JLP was quick to become affiliated to American MacCarthyism and by 1949 had put Manley so much on the defensive that he was forced to purge his party, the PNP and the TUC. This conflict is the central theme of a paper by Trevor Munroe, "The Marxist Left in Jamaica, 1945-1950," (Mona, ISER, 1972); "Political Change and Constitutional Development in Jamaica 1944-62; The Politics of False Decolonisation," Paper presented at the Bellevue Seminar, 1969 and The Politics of Constitutional Decolonisation; Jamaica 1944-62. (Mona: ISER, 1972). pp. 61-62.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

For the moment, however, the MPCA was the accredited union in the sugar industry the only Guianese union accredited to the newly formed ICFTU, the acceptable western organisation. But the union was under weak leadership and had come to depend on the industry for much of its funding. As a consequence it could not reestablish its independence.¹⁶⁸ Its dependence was however at the expense of the workers, since it could no longer approach the industry with any degree of authority. The disaffected membership was far from happy with the arrangement and increasingly transferred their loyalty to the GIWU.

Two factors are of particular relevance to this issue. In the first place the PPP was the acknowledged representative of the working people and had, prior to its accession to office, never stood aloof from working class issues. The party could not do so now, when elevation to office had provided it with greater credibility and authority to intervene on the behalf of the working people. The party had been severely critical of the Labour Party in the 1947 government when that party, on entering the legislature, had chosen to distance itself from its constituency. This reneging on the electoral commitment had been behind the party's recall motion, tabled by Cheddi Jagan in the previous government, which challenged the right to remain in office when once a constituency had lost confidence in its elected representative.¹⁶⁹ The PPP was thus not prepared to emulate the Labour Party in the jurisdiction dispute within the

¹⁶⁸ The Robertson Report 1954, p. 59, para. 174.

¹⁶⁹ MEC, 1 September 1948.

sugar industry. This coincidence of interest was highlighted when both organisations were forced to mobilise their respective resources in defence of a motion from Jagan for an acceptable mechanism for the settlement of jurisdictional disputes among trade unions.¹⁷⁰

The second factor was the close association between members of the PPP and the GIWU. The relationship was never disputed. Since the formation of the PPP in 1950 members of the union's executive had been prominent among the party's leadership. Not surprisingly a number of the politicians appearing on the PPP's list of candidates for the 1953 elections were on the executive of the GIWU, and Lachhmansingh, the leader of the union, was chosen by the party for a ministerial appointment. Recognising this relationship, the MPCA had over the years adopted an anti-PPP posture, openly with, and in the support of, the sugar industry.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ MLC, 31 July 1952.

¹⁷¹ Members of the MPCA executive contested the elections and were convincingly disposed of by PPP candidates. The Secretary of the MPCA, Sheik Mohammed Shakoor, lost his deposit against the virtually unknown PPP candidate, a Pln Rose Hall Field worker, Adjoda Singh. In a sugar estate constituency, Shakoor polled 6.3 percent. while Singh received 44.9 percent. Harewood, p. 31. Table 3. Lionel Luckhoo, the President of the MPCA in 1951 approached the American Consulate in Georgetown requesting assistance to combat "the communist menace confronting Guiana", the PPP. 74ID.00/3/85. Burke to The State Department, No. 109, 8 March 1951. Enclosure; Luckhoo to Burke, 7 March 1951.

A further feature of the politics of the PPP which definitely impinged on this particular issue was the fact that popular politics now brought the people into the Legislative chamber to listen to the debates and to express their sentiments, approval or disapproval, whenever necessary. To the old conservatives, this was the PPP's way of vulgarising the Assembly.¹⁷³ To many it was intimidating to have the people privy to legislative debates.¹⁷⁴ To some it was a form of coercion, stifling the freedom of dissent.¹⁷⁵ But to the PPP this was the essence of democracy, to have the people, on whose behalf decisions were being taken become witnesses to the decision making process.¹⁷⁶

The overall result of these processes and novel features was that the PPP was more committed than ever to act on behalf of the people whom it had undertaken to represent and the issue of meaningful representation in industry, so long in abeyance, was

¹⁷² MLC, 31 July 1952.

¹⁷³ The earlier brand of political representatives were always reluctant to demystify the proceedings of the colonial legislature. When the PPP invited the people into the Chamber, the conservative elements criticised the move as an attempt to demean the proceedings of the House and to intimidate the members. CO. 1031/60-1951-53. Savage to Secretary of State, No. 53, 25 September 1953.

¹⁷⁴ MHA, 29 September 1953.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., and 7 October 1953.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 30 September 1953

critical to the party's continued credibility among the working peoples.

But given the opposition's perception of the attitude of the PPP to labour on the one hand and to expatriate industry on the other, both Sugar and officialdom were convinced that the Labour Relations Bill represented the opening move in the attempt by the PPP to dictate the affairs of, and consequently destroy, the industry. Sugar in particular, but bauxite no less, also feared punitive taxation and a curtailment of their expatriation of profits.¹⁷⁷ In the final analysis they feared nationalisation, which even though it had not featured on the party's list of priorities, was very much a part of the strategy of the PPP to enhance revenue collection and fund colonial development.¹⁷⁸

The trouble which was ultimately to lead to the Bill began when the Minister of Labour approached the SPA on the issue of union recognition for the GIWU in August.¹⁷⁹ The SPA rejected the official intervention.¹⁸⁰ The issue was still in the process of

¹⁷⁷ The Department of State, Office of Intelligence Research Report, No. 6292, 27 May 1953; Spinner, 39 and Chase, 17-18 and 32.

¹⁷⁸ The PPP had always supported the principle of public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy, but because of the nature of the constitution, they recognised that it would have been both inexpedient and foolhardy to have attempted to introduce this measure so it was dropped. Interview with Jagan. 14 May 1987.

¹⁷⁹ Ashton Chase, Minister of Labour to Macnie, SPA, 21 July 1953 and Macnie to Minister of Labour, 20 August 1953. (Photocopy, UGL.)

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

negotiation when the union intervened to bring about a speedy resolution of a wages dispute and strike action was adopted in August.¹⁸¹ Field workers took strike action on 31 August 1953 ostensibly to back demands for an immediate increase in wages and the introduction of improved conditions of service. There is little doubt however that they were in effect endeavouring to secure recognition for their union, the GIWU. The strike lasted for twenty five days, until 24 September, when the President of the Union, who was also the Minister of Health, announced that the workers were prepared to return to work.¹⁸² It was for the most part a peaceful exercise but many were concerned that a Minister of the government should have supported a strike in the sugar industry and this concern was heightened when several unions affiliated to the Federation of Unions of Government Employees undertook a twenty four hour sympathy strike in support of the GIWU.

The strike introduced considerable acrimony into the negotiations in general, and the industrial relations climate in particular, but the negotiations for union recognition were never abandoned by either side. However, both the strike and the industrial hostility which it engendered were developments advantageous to the cause of Sugar and the SPA was anxious to exploit it to the full.

¹⁸¹ MEC, 9, 15, 22, and 29 September 1953; MHA, 24 September 1953; Chase, 16 and The Robertson Report 1954, 60-61, paras. 179-181.

¹⁸² MLA, 24 September 1954.

No amount of prodding from Ministers of the Government, the Governor or the Colonial Office, could get the SPA to moderate the protracted nature of its approach to negotiations or its obstructive attitude to the issue of union recognition.¹⁸³ Eventually the Minister of Labour was able to secure a pledge from the union to return to work on the promise that legislation, to be brought before the house, would resolve the jurisdictional dispute and other issues affecting labour-management relations in the industry.¹⁸⁴

The bill which he subsequently brought before the house attempted to secure recognition for the union with majority membership in the industry. This majority was to be determined by a poll conducted at the place of work and supervised by the Department of Labour.¹⁸⁵ On the surface there seems little amiss with this arrangement, but Sugar was fearful that recognition of the GIWU provide the PPP with direct access to the inner workings of the industry. All the suspicions derived from the fear of communism and associated with the PPP were read into the bill.

The PPP contended that with but minor modifications befitting local conditions the bill was patterned after the American

¹⁸³ CO. 1031/470, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 47, 20 September 1953 and No. 48, 21 September 1953. See also, Director of Booker to BGSPA, 11 September 1953 and P.H.Giddings to T.H. Naylor, Chairman, Demerara Ltd. Liverpool, 7 September 1953.

¹⁸⁴ Chase, 15-17 but particularly, p. 17.

¹⁸⁵ MEC, 15 September 1953 and MHA, 24 September 1953.

National Labour Relations Act and similar legislation in Canada.¹⁸⁶ On initially encountering the Bill, the colonial Office found nothing irregular in its design and rejected entreaties to resist the bill when it eventually came up for ratification in the United Kingdom. Officials in London nevertheless suggested that the bill could be opposed in Guiana, particularly in the State Council, a factor which would no doubt be looked upon with greater sympathy than an attempt to have HMG reject a bill with which they could find no fault.¹⁸⁷

Concluding Remarks

The cumulative effect of the PPP's programme since entering the government was the total disaffection of expatriate capital and the frightened conservative elite and local bourgeoisie, who now looked to the Colonial Office for their salvation. The programme itself reflected the single minded purposefulness with which the party undertook to honour its election promises to its constituency. This was however not at all in keeping with the British perception of colonial politics. It was common for

¹⁸⁶ MEC, 9 and 15 September 1953; The Robertson Report 1954, 58-61, paras. 169-186 for the major points over which the various disputants took issue with the Bill. For the PPP's rebuttal of the charges of ulterior motives, see Jagan, Forbidden Freedom, 51-54.

¹⁸⁷ CO. 1031/60-1951-53. Vernon to Mayle, 14 September 1953. However, E W. Bartrop, 19 September 1953 recommended that the Bill was against the policy of the HMG and would place HMG in an embarrassing position vis-a-vis Jamaica where there was a demand for a similar measure. Essentially however, Bartrop argued that the measure would "shut out the democratic union/unions pledged to constitutional methods but unable to command enough votes, among workers, other than members." Rogers seemed to share a similar view but confessed that it was not enough grounds to occasion the exercise of the Governor's reserve powers. Ibid., Rogers to Lloyd, 15 September 1953.

colonial politicians to make promises to their constituencies but this was only acceptable because these politicians were not expected to attempt to fulfil these promises when they acceded to office.¹⁸⁸ The PPP was committed to reforms and was reluctant to compromise its legislative programme. Jagan subsequently disclosed that because of the nature of the constitution the PPP had decided that it could not succeed with a revolutionary programme.¹⁸⁹ Ministers were convinced that the Governor and the ex-officios, the nominated elements in the State Council and HMG would not permit the PPP a free hand in the government and so they chose to proceed with moderation.¹⁹⁰

But the PPP's notion of moderation did not appease the fears of the opposition. The party's legislative programme was informed by three factors. It continued to conduct itself as a disempowered group; an opposition enjoying a majority in a Legislative Council circumscribed by the delimiting powers of an unsympathetic Governor equipped with residual powers and a State Council equipped with delaying and nullifying powers.¹⁹¹ Its advocacy, highly abrasive, lacked the finesse of the old conservatives and alarmed as much as outraged both the nominated gentlemen and official sections of the house, but this was the advocacy of the colonial politician, socialised in the politics

¹⁸⁸ Spinner, 53 and Reynold Burrowes, The Wild Coast: An Account of Politics in Guyana, (Cambridge: 1984). pp. 51-52.

¹⁸⁹ Jagan, The West On Trial, 119.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 118-119; 74ID.00/7-1053. Maddox to The Department of State, 10 July 1953.

¹⁹¹ MHA, 18 May 1953.

of the working people. As time went by the great divide separating these groups grew wider and deeper. Thirdly the party throughout seemed unaware of, or possibly indifferent to the fact that the cumulative effect of its programme of reforms was an unavoidable uniformity of disapproval and fear among its opponents. After a while, each section became so fearful of the PPP that they were prepared to go to any length to remove them from office.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMERGENCY IN BRITISH GUIANA, 1953-1955.

Introduction

In April 1953 a group of young nationalists won the general election in convincing manner. For seven years, first as the PAC and then as the PPP they had consistently criticised expatriate capital for exploiting the local population and colonial administrations for displaying an indifference to the sufferings which colonial capital caused. They attacked local organisations for their lack of commitment to the working people and local politicians for their wanton display of opportunism. When therefore they entered the Government they were determined to avoid the shortcomings they had criticised in their predecessors. Antagonistic to colonial capital and distrustful of the colonial administration they embarked on a programme of reforms that frightened capital and officials alike. Their indifference to the apprehension of these forces blinded them to the possible consequences of their programme, and they more than anyone else were alarmed at the vigour with which Whitehall responded to the pressure from forces opposed to democratic reforms in British Guiana. This chapter is concerned with that responses. It also discusses the various responses, local and international, to British military occupation of Guiana and the withdrawal of the Waddington constitution after it had been on trial for only one hundred and thirty three days.

The Forces of Resistance Marshalled Against the PPP Government

In spite of the outward show of calm, the Colonial Office was concerned enough about the victory of the PPP at the general election in April 1953 to begin preparations for the worst almost immediately. On 30 May, a specific request was made for an assessment of the reliability of the local Police and Volunteer forces "in the case of riots arising out of political developments" in British Guiana.¹ A few days later they demanded an assessment of the available military forces located in the Caribbean to be used in the colony if "as seems possible, disturbances are caused by East Indians".² Far from being routine, these requests indicated an underlying disquiet among officials in the Colonial Office about the possible consequences of the PPP victory. This anxiety was again manifest in the Colonial Office suggestion that the efficiency of the police and local militia be strengthened, "to meet the risks of disturbances or riots, racial or otherwise, attached to the PPP victory of the elections" and the request that, "the extent of PPP support within the forces be investigated."³ These queries and instructions generated considerable disquiet in the colonial Governor, Sir Alfred Savage.

Savage had only recently been appointed, taking up his position on 18 April 1953, after a four year term in Barbados and was therefore familiar with the hostility which the Jagans evoked

¹ CO 1031/1166, Lloyd to Savage, No 12, 30 May 1953

² Ibid , Mayle to Savage, No 20, 3 June 1953

³ Ibid

within colonial administrative circles in the region. During his tenure as Governor of Barbados his was the only West Indian administration which did not pursue the colonial policy of declaring the Jaggans prohibited citizens. He was nevertheless concerned about the signals emanating from the Colonial Office, and his responses were intended to allay fears.⁴ But while the Governor was prepared to give the PPP a chance to become socialised in the administrative culture to which its members were most unaccustomed, he realised that strong forces were at work to undermine the government and to discredit the efforts of the party. Already he had been instructed to maintain close communication links with the British Naval Commander-in-Chief in Trinidad and the Military Commander-in-Chief in Barbados.⁵ This heightened sensitivity to the possibility of some form of nationalist insurrection in British Guiana was certainly related to the problems in which HMG was engaged simultaneously in Kenya, Gold Coast, Malaya, Central African Federation and Egypt.

As a consequence of their uncertainties the Colonial Office caused to be prepared two important secret documents. The first of these, drawn up in British Guiana by the Commissioner of Police, gave a comprehensive assessment of both the Police and the Volunteer forces.⁶ The other was a contingency plan prepared

⁴ Ibid , Savage to Secretary of State No 49, 27 August 1953 and No 37, 17 August 1953 as well as Savage to Lloyd, No 52, 13 September 1953 (All marked private and confidential)

⁵ Ibid , Mayle to Savage, No 12, 30 May 1953

⁶ Ibid , Savage to Mayle, 24 June 1953 (Private)

in the Colonial Office, from reports submitted by Military and Naval staff in the British West Indies. This plan gave a breakdown of troops available in the West Indies and the speed with which they could be mobilised for action to counter anticipated political problems in British Guiana.⁷ The predominance of Africans in both the local forces was assessed as advantageous to the plans being refined by HMG, since in their estimation disturbances in the colony would most likely be caused by the East Indians.⁸ Nevertheless Imperial forces stationed in the region were alerted to the possibility of a military intervention in British Guiana should the local forces prove either unreliable or in any way deficient.⁹ In subsequent despatches, the possibility of intervention was more clearly defined and by September a plan for the removal of the PPP from office had taken definite shape. Whitehall's interpretation of developments unfolding in the colony confirmed them that the plan was necessary and would before long be put into use.¹⁰

As we have seen, the PPP on being sworn into office immediately became involved in implementing its election promises, and its programme created considerable unease within certain sections of the colony. The potential for conflict was therefore ever present and those opposed to the PPP were not reluctant to exploit it. The Demerara Bauxite Company, one of the most

⁷ Ibid , Mayle to Savage, No 20, 3 June 1953

⁸ Ibid , Headquarters, West Indian Forces to War Office, 3 September 1953, (Private)

⁹ CO 1031/1166, Mayle to Savage, No 20, 3 June 1953

¹⁰ Ibid

influential elements opposed to the PPP, was wary of becoming visibly involved in local politics and expressed a willingness to work along with the PPP.¹¹ Like the SPA Demba was conscious of the commitment of the PPP to limit the expatriation of colonial profits and to redress the imbalance between direct and indirect taxation. It is, however, necessary to reflect on the fact that the American companies were not unaware of the attitude of the Washington administration to the PPP and therefore may have found it unnecessary to articulate a hostile policy in public since this hostility was already evident in the political administration of the United States. As the weeks went by the Americans grew increasingly perturbed by the Marxist rhetoric and proposals for economic reforms of the PPP.¹²

Sugar was the most influential of those opposed to the PPP. Noting the outcome of the election, the BGSPA expressed its dissatisfaction with developments in British colonial policy which had made it possible for the PPP to come to power.¹³ The significant influence of Sugar was brought to bear on the anxiety which pervaded in Whitehall. Sugar did not operate in isolation. It mobilised its clients in the colony and together attacked the PPP and the colonial administration from within both the colony

¹¹ CO 1031/935 Internal memorandum by Windsor, 6 May 1953

¹² 74ID 00/9-1053 Maddox, (ACG-Port of Spain), to The Department of State, No 76, 10 September 1953

¹³ CO 1031/118 BGSPA to Lloyd, 30 May 1953 (Secret)

and its citadel in the West India Committee rooms in London.¹⁴ Together these several forces exerted considerable and persistent pressure on Whitehall to remove the PPP from office.

Pressures were also mounted by the local press which was wholly or partly owned by those defeated in the April elections and who perceived the PPP administration as a serious threat to their welfare. The press, particularly, The Daily Argosy and The Guiana Graphic, combined with the Roman Catholic church to expose a Communist threat in the colony. Together they divined a communist objective to every piece of legislation attempted by the PPP.¹⁵ The Church was outraged as much by the communist motivation it perceived in the PPP as by the attitude of the PPP to the future role of the Church in education.¹⁶

Repeated reports of Savage's ineptitude were forwarded by the BGSPA to the Colonial Office accompanied by requests that he be recalled or that specific aspects of the affairs of the colony be withdrawn from his direct administration.¹⁷ The West India Committee, the economic lobby of expatriate British capital in

¹⁴ CO 1031/60 P Rogers on Meeting with J M Campbell, Chairman, Booker Brothers McConnell & Co, and of The West India Committee, 11 September 1953, Campbell to My Dear Philip, 11 September 1953, Vernon on Meeting with Campbell, 12 September 1953 and Campbell to Kingsley Martin, 27 October 1953

¹⁵ Ibid, Campbell to Kingsley Martin, 27 October 1953 and CO 1031/470, S M Shakoor, General Secretary, MPCA to Sir Frederick Seaford, a Director of Booker Brothers McConnell & Co 26 September 1953

¹⁶ CO 1031/470 "The Education Policy of The PPP" in Rev W Easton to R J Harvey, 26 September 1953

¹⁷ CO 1031/60-1951-53, Savage to Secretary of State, No 47, 20 September 1953 and No 48, 21 September 1953, Director, Booker Holdings to BGSPA, 11 September 1953 and Follett-Smith to Campbell, 19 September 1953

the Caribbean, whose main spokesperson was the head of the Booker group of companies in Guiana brought its tremendous influence to bear in the Colonial Office.¹⁸ These forces both goaded and provided the Colonial Office with a basis for military action in Guiana.

A senior official, W.H.Ingram, Colonial Office Adviser on Overseas Information, sent to acquire a first hand opinion of the Guiana situation ran into an almost hysterical opposition, and before he left the colony had become convinced that irrespective of the means employed it was essential that the PPP be removed from office.¹⁹ He demanded covert action aimed at unseating the government as a first principle but did not rule out other, more direct, acts of aggression against the PPP.²⁰

The Governor however had not been persuaded that a crisis was imminent. It is true that he subsequently admitted that it was difficult to get along with the Ministers.²¹ He even accused a few of them of being extremists but he was confident that with patience and tact they could ^{be} controlled and that given sufficient time they would become responsible political administrators.²² His willingness to coax the PPP into moderation was offensive to

¹⁸ Ibid , Internal memorandum by Rogers, 11 September 1953

¹⁹ W H Ingram's Collection, MSS , British Empire S 424, Box, 5, File No 5, Information Work on British Guiana in the Light of the Communist Threat, 13 July 1953 (RHL)

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ CO 1031/121-1953 Savage to Secretary of State, 13 September 1953

²² CO 1031/123-1953, Luke to Rogers, 12 September 1953

the opponents of the party who disparagingly accused him of possessing a missionary zeal.²³ Others felt that he was completely out of his depths in dealing with the PPP.²⁴ They complained that unchecked, the Governor would be responsible for the destruction of British capital in the colony.²⁵

Throughout the months of June and July the Colonial Office pressed its chief administrator to support the plan to remove the PPP from office but he remained steadfast in his support for the inexperienced administration.²⁶ The pressure continued throughout August and into September.²⁷ The Colonial Office could not reconcile the conduct of the Governor with the reports of political deviance by the PPP, including the calling of a strike in the sugar industry, which they had received from Guiana.²⁸

It is in this context that the strike in the sugar belt called on 31 August 1953 took on special significance. The strike lasted for twenty five days until 24 September when the President of the Union who was also the Minister of *Health* announced that the

²³ CO 1031/60, P M Giddings to H Naylor, 7 September 1953

²⁴ Ibid and Ibid , BGSPA , to DSG , 12 September 1953

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ CO 1031/1166, Savage to Mayle, 24 June 1953 and 20 July 1953

²⁷ Ibid , The Commander, Caribbean Area to War Office, 4, 28, and 30 September 1953 CO 1031/60 Rogers on Meeting with Campbell, Chairman, Booker Brothers McConnell & Co, and of The West India Committee, 11 September 1953, Campbell to My Dear Philip, 11 September 1953 and Vernon on Meeting with Campbell, 12 September 1953

²⁸ CO 1031/123, Luke, Comptroller of CDWF, in an alarmist report on a visit to the colony, claimed that a crisis was imminent 12 September 1953

workers were prepared to return to work.²⁹ The strike in the sugar industry, as Sugar had reason to believe could be exploited to give the Admiralty and the War Office the opportunity to intervene in what was now described as a threat to law and order in the colony. The strike also elevated the security forces to a position of considerable influence against which the Governor could not, for long, prevail.³⁰ For instance the Governor reported that the strike was being conducted in an orderly manner, but military intelligence assessed the situation as representing a serious threat to the security of the colony. Because it was a matter of security in which the Governor was expected to be advised by the Security Officer the latter's opinion was of greater consideration. Increasingly, thereafter, the combined influence of the military, the navy and the opponents of the PPP tended to outweigh the opinion of the colonial Governor, who by the end of September had become effectively marginalised.³¹ As far as the security forces were concerned, given "the attitude of the PPP...and the volatile nature of their East Indian supporters in the sugar industry," the strike represented a serious crisis in British Guiana and

²⁹ MLA, 24 September 1954

³⁰ CO 1031/1166, War Office to Commander, Caribbean 25 September 1953 General Jackson, Commander, Caribbean Area was sent to British Guiana and asked to consult with the colonial Governor but it was obvious that he was thereafter guided by the expertise of the soldier

³¹ An important aspect of this marginalisation was the effective shifting of the central directing force to London on the advice of the Chief of Command of Caribbean Forces as represented by General Jackson. The initiatives now originated in London and this process reduced the colonial Governor to merely receiving instructions from that source

the circumstances for which the plan had been constructed had materialised³²

But after several attempts the government had by 21 September arrived at an acceptable formula for the resumption of work in the sugar industry. Central to this agreement was legislation to have the jurisdictional conflicts settled. The Labour Relations Bill intended for this purpose confirmed the worst fears of Sugar about the "communist" intent of the government against the industry, and it was therefore opposed. It seemed now even more important that the PPP be removed from office. Thus when the Speaker ruled against a request from the Minister of Labour for a suspension of the Standing Orders to permit a speedy passage of the bill through the legislature, and the Ministers angrily walked out of the legislature, there were calls from amongst its members for immediate imperial action.³³

But the decision had already been taken to move troops to the colony and remove the PPP from office. In an interesting Memorandum in which he retraces the process through which the decision to invade the colony was made, Vernon claims that the decision was made on the 23 September after news of a strike called in support of the sugar workers strike was reported. He also records that the decision was communicated to the Governor

³² Ibid , Headquarters, West Indian Forces to War Office, 3 September 1953 (Private), CO 1031/60, Lloyd to Secretary of State, 15 September 1953, CO 1031/123, Secretary of State to Minister of State, the United Nations Delegation, 16 September 1953 and CO 1031/122, Secretary of State to Savage, No 20, 19 September 1953

³³ MLC , 24 September 1953

on the following day, 24 September.³⁴ Since the strike provided an acceptable cover for military intervention it had been intended that the troops would arrive in the colony while the strike was still in progress.³⁵ So advanced had these plans become and so convinced were the Colonial Office principals of the need to be rid of PPP, that when the likely termination of the strike threatened to remove this secure cover postponement of the plan to invade the colony seemed very unwise.³⁶ The plan was updated and immediately put into operation.³⁷

The decision having been taken in London on 23 September to move troops from Barbados, Jamaica and British Honduras to the scene of "the communist revolt" in Guiana the security officer then advised the Governor of a deterioration in the security situation to the extent that it was doubtful whether fifty percent of the local forces would respond to full duty in the event of a crisis.³⁸ This was a new development and one in which the Governor had become a reluctant participant. From the beginning the Colonial Office had sought justification for the movement of troops to Guiana. The Governor never recognised the need for

³⁴ CO 1031/1170, Vernon to Mayle, 24 November 1953, Secretary of State to Savage, No 21, 24 September 1953, CAB 128/26, Minutes of Cabinet meeting at which this plan was outlined, discussed and approved, No 33, 2 October 1953

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ CO 1031/1166, War Office to Commander, Caribbean Area, 28 September 1953

³⁸ CO 1031/1166, Commander, Caribbean Area to War Office, 28 September 1953 and Savage to Secretary of State, No 66, 29 September 1953, in which he reported that he was "advised today that the security situation in the police and volunteer forces had deteriorated much more than was previously believed"

military intervention.³⁹ In the circumstances it was perhaps more than fortuitous that the "unreliability" of the local forces was discovered by a visiting security officer rather than one familiar with the colony.⁴⁰

The Colonial Office thereafter issued instructions to the colonial Governor, detailing his role in the emergency scheduled for 9 October.⁴¹ The Governor was instructed that the

Arrival of forces, arrest of dangerous persons, publication of emergency Order in Council and the issue of statement would, of course, have to be simultaneous with the withdrawal of powers of Ministers. Meanwhile the greatest secrecy is essential in making these preparations in order that Ministers might not be warned of our intentions before we are ready.

He was informed that the necessary Order-in-Council would be obtained within the succeeding ten days and a draft of the speech he was to deliver to the Guianese public was forwarded to him for comments. The speech contained a catalogue of allegations, that were to a large extent unsubstantiated. In it, the PPP was branded a party of communists determined to subvert the constitution to establish a communist dictatorship in the colony. Their irresponsible behaviour had caused a depression in the

³⁹ Ibid , Top Secret Document Disturbances in British Guiana, W Strickland to Rogers, 25 September 1953

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid , Secretary of State to Savage, No 21, 24 September 1953 (Private)

economy and their abuse of powers had created a crisis which forced HMG, to dismiss the Ministers of the government.⁴² The Governor was equipped with emergency powers with which to maintain law and order while the protection of public property would be undertaken by British troops. An interim administration was to be appointed to initiate and manage a programme of rapid social and economic reforms. In due course a Commission would report on the crisis.

The case against the PPP was constructed around the communist threat so much feared both by the local opponents of the PPP, the main parties in the British Parliament and the administration in Washington. Thus HMG was certain that the Labour Party in particular would find it difficult to criticise the action against a communist threat in the West Indies. HMG also felt that the United States and her allies would be unlikely to seriously challenge military intervention, however arbitrary, directed against a communist regime in the hemisphere.⁴³ The Colonial Office had since mid-September been at pains to secure this backing⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid , The refined and accepted copy of this speech was enclosed in Secretary of State to Savage, No 47, 4 October 1953

⁴³ CAB 128/26, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, No 33, 2 October 1953

⁴⁴ The Colonial Office was at pains to secure this backing See, CO 1031/120-1953, Vernon to Campbell, 16 September 1953 and Secretary of State to Minister of State, UK Delegation at the UN, 16 September 1953 See also, 74ID 00/10-1953, Maddox to The State Department, No 36, 1 October 1953

All arrangements were completed in secret; having set itself firmly on course to move troops to the colony and remove the elected government from office HMG issued a press release,

It has been evident that the intrigues of Communists and their associates, some in Ministerial posts, threaten the welfare and good administration of the colony. If these processes were to continue unchecked, an attempt might be made by methods which are familiar in some other parts of the world to set up a communist dominated state. This would lead to bloodshed.⁴⁵

In the circumstances HMG had despatched the navy and the army, with the utmost despatch in order to preserve peace and the safety of all classes.⁴⁶

Three days later and with British soldiers in the colony the Colonial Secretary, Mr John Gutch read another statement over the Guianese radio,⁴⁷

Her Majesty's Government has decided that the Constitution of British Guiana must be suspended to prevent Communist subversion of the Government and a

⁴⁵ CO 1031/119, Secretary of State to Savage, 6 October 1953

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Statement by HMG read by John Gutch, MLC, 9 October 1953 in Great Britain, British Guiana, Suspension of the Constitution, (London 1953) Whitepaper, Cmd 8980 pp 16-17

dangerous crisis both in public order and public affairs.

It is perhaps not without significance that the Governor chose not to read the statement particularly as it adverted to a preparedness of the PPP government "to go to any lengths, including violence, to turn British Guiana into a communist state" a conclusion the Governor did not wholly support.

Reactions to Imperial Intervention in British Guiana, 1953.

Dr Jagan attempted to have the Governor explain firstly the rumour that British troops were on the move to Guiana and subsequently the very presence of those troops in the colony but the Governor was initially reluctant to be drawn on the issue.⁴⁸ Subsequently, he found it extremely difficult to convince both the Members of the PPP in the legislature and the general public at large as to the real purpose of the troops.⁴⁹

Immediate public reaction to the extreme measure adopted by HMG was one of general disbelief. The strike in the sugar industry had ended in the middle of September and the Labour Relations Bill had been discussed and passed in the Legislative Council. In the circumstances it was difficult to explain the rationale for an invasion in time of restored general tranquillity. Ironically when British warships arrived off the coast of Guiana,

⁴⁸ MHA, 7 October 1953 and MEC , 6, 7 and 8 October 1953

⁴⁹ MEC , 8 October 1953

the colony was calm, with the capital city engrossed in a regional cricket match against neighbouring Trinidad.⁵⁰

Even the troops could not justify their presence in the colony. As they went about the streets of Georgetown looking for a bloody rebellion they became the butt of local humorists and the cause of considerable embarrassment to the Governor who was expected to explain their presence in the colony.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr. Whittington, could not disguise his surprise. He noted " **There are no demonstrations, there is no general strike, there is nothing abnormal happening here whatsoever**". And as if to emphasise his disbelief he reiterated, "**There have been no demonstrations and no trouble whatsoever**".⁵¹ These comments were also printed in a conservative newspaper that had been campaigning for the removal of the PPP from office, but which had been just as bewildered and embarrassed by the autocratic manner in which its desire was fulfilled in Guiana. Even more significant was the response of Mr. J M. Campbell, who as an official of the very influential West Indian Committee and Managing-Director of Booker Holdings, had done more than most to press the Colonial Office to remove the PPP from office. Campbell had also been the prime mover in the dilatory response of the SPA to the jurisdictional dispute earlier on. He also could not disguise his surprise.

⁵⁰ CO 1031/1166, Savage to Secretary of State, No 84, 6 October 1953 and Secretary of State to the UK Delegation in New York, No 5 October 1953

⁵¹ The Daily Chronicle, 7 October 1953 and The Daily Mail, 7 October 1953

The major trouble in the colony is surely over.

Strikers have returned to work and what looked like a constitutional problem has now apparently been settled.

I find it hard to understand what this is all about.⁵²

These statements were well founded. Both can be supported by a perusal of the entries of the Occurrence Books of at least four of the five police stations on the East Coast of Demerara, none of which revealed any incident supportive of a state of insurrection or of restiveness.⁵³ The same is true of the Occurrence Books of the two main West Demerara police stations. These records reveal the normal incidence of criminal activity. There is nothing in them to suggest a state of civil disorder.⁵⁴

The working people were the most surprised and for some time could not attach meaning to what had really happened. They were so confused that for the time being they were also afraid of the troops. But the leaders subsequently ordered restraint and this reduced the possibility of incidents which the military might have chosen to exploit. Throughout the succeeding months, with the emergency regulations in force, the presence of the military

⁵² The Daily Chronicle, 5 October 1953 See also letter from the English mother resident in the colony at the time, Barara E Lines to Editor, The New Statesman, 31 October 1953

⁵³ These were diaries of criminal occurrences in the respective districts as reported by police constables, aggrieved complainants and police informants and recorded in journal entry fashion (Guyana Police Headquarters, Georgetown)

⁵⁴ It is nevertheless important to note that the local Militia and Volunteer Force were called up to camp on Monday, 5 October 1953, a fact that could hardly have escaped the notice of the Deputy Commissioner

and its programme of harassment failed to provoke a confrontation. This did not change until the leaders considered a change of tactics was necessary.

While HMG made few new friends among the working people in the colony as a result of British action, it was assured of some support from Western governments. The American administration in Washington endorsed the actions of HMG. It was the era of cold war politics and the United States was engaged in campaigns against communist ideas within its own border and displayed a similar enthusiasm for waging campaigns against suspected communists abroad.⁵⁵ The CIA had only a few months previously helped topple the government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran and a similar fate was planned for the Guatemalan regime of Colonel Jacob Arbenz Guzman.⁵⁶ Britain on the other hand was engaged with nationalist revolts in Malaya and Kenya; and even the latter she treated in part as a communist insurgency thereby winning the support of Washington.

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, was a leading exponent of the hysterical anti-communist crusade on which the western world had embarked.⁵⁷ Together, the two leaders Churchill and Eisenhower, seemed agreed that western capitalism

⁵⁵ Spinner, 53

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Vincent Rothwell, "Britain and the First Cold War," Richard Crockett and Steve Smith, The Cold War Past and Present, (London 1987) pp 58-76 and Anthony Adamthwaite, "Britain and the World The View from the Foreign Office" International Affairs, XVII, 2, (1985), 223-235

had to be saved from the scourge of communism.⁵⁸ Lending unrestrained support to their leaders were John Foster Dulles in the American State Department and Oliver Lyttelton, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The former was an ambitious cold war warrior while the latter was ever willing to support the cause of colonial capital in the colonies. Fearful of a Latin American opposition to the intervention Dulles committed all American diplomats in the region to securing the uncritical support for British actions in Guiana.⁵⁹

International Reaction to British Intervention in Guiana

When news of the military invasion first broke in the Caribbean, colonial administrations and nationalist politicians alike withheld support for the PPP. Grantley Adams of Barbados and Bustamante of Jamaica were the first, in the colonial Empire, to condemn the PPP.⁶⁰ Other Caribbean territories, though less strident and in a few instances, less precipitate and willing, followed with uncritical support for the British.⁶¹ Adams was first and foremost against the PPP and confessed that he had contemplated informing the Colonial Office of the communist

⁵⁸ Ibid See Bruce R Kuniholm, "The Origins of the First Cold War," in Crockett and Smith, pp 37-57

⁵⁹ 74ID 00/10-653, The Department of State to All American Diplomatic Posts in the other American Republics, 6 October 1953 and 74ID 00/10-953, The Department of State to The American Embassy in London and Port of Spain, 9 October 1953 Both documents, signed by Foreign Secretary John Foster Dulles committed American resources to securing uncritical support for British actions in Guiana

⁶⁰ HCD 578, 22 December 1953 and The Daily Gleaner, 16 October 1953

⁶¹ For the response of the Executive Councils, see, CO 1031/1188, H Rance to Secretary of State, No 448, 8 October 1953, K, Blackbourne to Secretary of State, No 127, 13 October 1953, H. Foot to Secretary of State, No 94, 14 October 1953 and E B Beatham to Secretary of State, No 354, 14 October 1953

potential of the PPP in office.⁶² Subsequently, Adams wrote to the Labour Party recommending that the PPP delegation be denied an audience in London. Whitehall regarded Adams as the model colonial politician.⁶³ He was completely Afro-saxon, a factor which in no small part accounted for his selection on the British delegation to the United Nations to defend British Colonialism against the anti-colonial lobby in that organisation.⁶⁴ He accepted the British policy of incremental constitutional devolution and was intolerant of those impatient with this measured approach to self-government.⁶⁵ He was a socialist and was convinced that the Guianese political leaders were political imbeciles.⁶⁶

Bustamante's relations with the PPP were acrimonious at best and malignant at its worst. The PPP was always mindful of this acrimony and preferred to distance themselves from the man and his party. The Jamaica Labour Party and The Bustamante Industrial Trade Union were among the few organisations in the region with which the party shared no fraternal relations.⁶⁷ While both Bustamante and Adams regarded themselves as

⁶² Ibid , Governor Sir R Arrundell to Secretary of State, No 333, 16 October 1953

⁶³ HCD , 152, 578, 22 October 1953 and The Daily Gleaner, 16 October 1953

⁶⁴ WICC , LXIII, 1211, November 1948 237-39

⁶⁵ F Hoyos, pp 124-133

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ 741D 00/3-851, Burke to Department of State, No 109, 8 March 1953 In which Jagan responds to a statement made by Bustamante about the PPP In this Report Jagan allegedly disclaims fraternal relations with Bustamante's organisations, claiming that the Jamaica connection was with Manley

socialists, they were as intolerant of Marxist-Leninism as either Senator Joseph McCarthy or Churchill.⁶⁸ Their reaction to the Guiana misfortune surprised no one.

Bustamante and Adams apart, however, Caribbean politicians in general believed that the cause of the Caribbean political liberation was endangered by the aggressive radicalism of the PPP. They were alarmed that British colonial policy would be frightened into reducing the devolutionary process to an even greater degree of gradualism.⁶⁹

Not surprisingly, the Caribbean "man in the street" was less than impressed with the British case against the PPP. Those prepared to give the British the benefit of the doubt, felt that there was more to the Guiana case than the British had so far released. They supposed that the British were playing their cards very close to their chest and in the circumstances, these Caribbean organisations and peoples were prepared to refrain from criticism until all the facts became public. However, they made it quite clear that there was not enough in the initial press releases to justify British actions in Guiana.⁷⁰ Interestingly, both the parties of Adams and Bustamante adopted this cautious position.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Monroe, Constitutional Decolonisation , 60-64 and The Daily Gleaner, 9 March 1948

⁶⁹ CO 1031/1188, Sir K Blackbourne (Leewards) to Secretary of State, No 127, 13 October 1953

⁷⁰ Ibid , H Rance to Secretary of State, No 57, 14 October 1953, Arrundell to Secretary of State, No 330, 16 October 1953 and H Foot to Secretary of State, No 21, 21 October 1953

⁷¹ See for instance, The Workers' Voice, 121 October 1953, 1031/1429, Governor Windward Islands to Secretary of State, No 6, 13 January 1954 and The Jamaican Federation of Trade Unions to Secretary of State, 12 February 1955

In general however, Caribbean peoples were critical of the invasion and Governors were, one after the other, forced to report to the Colonial Office that the intervention was not supported in the colonies. There was not a single Caribbean Governor who escaped this embarrassing task.⁷²

Opposition parties came out against the act and were not reluctant to petition their Governors on the matter.⁷³ Whitehall was therefore left with the uncritical support of only the political leaders of Barbados and Jamaica and in the case of Jamaica official support was overwhelmed by public criticism of the invasion in that island.⁷⁴ But the Colonial Office was perhaps most disappointed with the dominions which did not offer uncritical endorsement for the intervention.⁷⁵

The failure to win more convincing support in the region induced HMG to seek approval for the intervention elsewhere and the Colonial Office set out to win this support in the Colonies, particularly in Africa.⁷⁶ But once again they were disappointed,

⁷² CO 1031/1188, Responses from Governors, Arrundell, No 330, 16 October 1953, Mc Pherson to Secretary of State, No 42, 19 October 1943, Arrundell to Secretary of State, No 337, 19 October 1953, E B Beetham to Secretary of State, No 364, 22 October 1953, H Rance to Secretary of State, No 63, 21 October 1953 and H Foot to Secretary of State, No 102, 21 October 1953

⁷³ 741M 21/3154, Maddox to The Department of State, No 332, 31 March 1954

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ CO 1031/1189, UK High Commissioner to Canada to CRO, No 107, 10 November 1953

⁷⁶ Ibid, Vernon to Williamson, 12 October 1953 and Smith to Vernon, 13 October 1953

the Colonial Office did not receive the support of a single African colony.⁷⁷

For a time it appeared that Whitehall's case would be subjected to the rigorous scrutiny of the United Nations since there were more than a few members who were very anxious to have the British defend their actions in that Organisation.⁷⁸ The British delegation resisted the attempt even though assured of the support of the United States.⁷⁹ They accused the anti-colonial Lobby of interfering in the internal affairs of HMG and threatened to withdraw from the Assembly if the matter was brought to the floor for debate. This was the same policy adopted by HMG with regard to the Kenya issue which it successfully prevented from being discussed in the UN.⁸⁰

But the criticism mounted in the Assembly was a reflection of the condemnation which had attended the military invasion of the colony. First the Latin American states, then the Eastern European Bloc followed by the recently independent states, including India, accused the Conservatives of retreating from an enlightened policy position within recent times.⁸¹ Nehru accused England of demonstrating *negative* tendencies in her dealings

⁷⁷ CO 1031/1188, Arden Clarke to Secretary of State, No 103, 23 October 1953 and No 13, 23 October 1953, and Hall, Sierra Leone to Secretary of State, No 13, 16 October 1953

⁷⁸ FO 371/107072, Mr Mason to Sir G Jebb, 7 October 1953 and Mr Jackson to Secretary of State, Foreign Office 6 October 1953 See also, Mr Cope to Mr Mason, 7 October 1953

⁷⁹ Ibid , Jackson to Secretary of State, Foreign Office 6 October 1953

⁸⁰ Ibid , Unsigned Note on the Kenya precedent in the UN

⁸¹ CO 1031/1189, Reactions to British Intervention in British Guiana

with her colonies and threatened to have her exposed in the United Nations.⁸²

Dissatisfied with the explanations they had been given for British actions in Guiana, MPs demanded a full statement from the Secretary of State as soon as Parliament reassembled after the summer recess. The request was discussed at a Cabinet meeting on 13 October where it was decided to issue a White paper on the matter on 20 October for discussion on 22 October 1953.⁸³ Members of the House were provided with the Official Statement issued on 9 October and the text of the Governor's broadcast made on the same day along with the White Paper giving the details of the events leading up to the suspension on 20 October as promised.⁸⁴ The paper elaborated the original charges, but once again provided only a modicum of supporting evidence. Once again Ministers were accused of conduct detrimental to the true welfare of the colonial state and prejudicial to the continuation of civil order and economic progress. They were charged with fermenting strikes for political ends. The paper noted that between January and May, at the end of which month the party actually came to office, there had been ^{only} three strikes in the colony but ^{that there were} sixty four in the period May to September. The increase in worker restiveness was attributed to the excessive interference of Ministers in industrial affairs.

⁸² FO 371/107068, UK High Commission to India to Commonwealth Relations Office, No 254, 16 October 1953 reports on Mr Nehru's response to the British Guiana incident

⁸³ CAB 128/26, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, No 45, 13 October 1953

⁸⁴ HCD 518 21 October 1953 1952-65

Essentially however, the allegation was concerned with the involvement of the PPP in the jurisdictional dispute in the sugar industry, the application of the GIWU for recognition, and the subsequent strike in the industry during the months of August and September which brought industrial activity within the industry to a standstill.

Other issues raised in the White Paper included lifting the ban on the entry of West Indian communists, contrary to the general policy of other West Indian governments; repealing the Undesirable Publications Ordinance in an attempt to invalidate the Governor's right to search and seize literature which he deemed detrimental to the general welfare of the colony; of attempting to reclaim literature, the subject of an earlier seizure; and of attempting to have the Comptroller of Customs who was associated with the earlier seizure penalised.⁸⁵

Ministers were also accused of misusing their right of appointment to Boards and Committees in order to gain control of strategic bodies. They had pressured the Governor for powers of appointment to Boards and Committees, then nominated persons totally unqualified and in other ways unsuited for such appointments.⁸⁶

The Paper alleged that the PPP were guilty of spreading racial hatred. The substance of this charge was the establishment of

⁸⁵ The Robertson Report 1954, pp 55-56, paras, 161-63 but particularly, para, 162

⁸⁶ British Guiana, Suspension of the Constitution, The White Paper, p 5, para, 13

an "African Colonial Affairs Committee" which declared support for the colonial struggle in Kenya and Malaya and was totally opposed to white domination in the colonies.⁸⁷ It was said that the party also planned to secularise Church schools and to rewrite the curriculum with a particular political bias. Ministers allegedly neglected their administrative duties. Ministers were accused of failing to respond to their administrative obligations and of causing confidence in the colony's economic development to be undermined, development projects to be delayed and investments opportunities to be lost to the colony.⁸⁸

Additionally the government, by its actions, attempted to undermine the loyalty of the Police. Two statements were submitted purporting to substantiate this allegation. In the first, Dr. Jagan in a speech had made reference to the setting up of a "People's Police force." On 16 May, two days before the opening of the legislature Dr Jagan had complained that

in the past when we have asked for bread we were given bullets and those who fired at workers were honoured by the colonial masters. But when the PPP gets into power the same bullets which were fired on those poor people will be fired at the oppressors. We shall organise a Police Force; it will be known as the People's Police.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid , p 5, para, 14

⁸⁸ Ibid , pp 8-9, paras, 24-27, but particularly, p 8, paras, 24-25

⁸⁹ Ibid , p 4, para, 9

In the second, the Minister of Labour had attempted to issue a statement of guidance to the police but on the advice of the Chief Secretary it was withheld. The statement contained the following observation which was subsequently deemed irresponsible by an investigating Commission which visited the colony in 1954.

It is nauseating to find that as soon as there is a labour dispute or stoppage of work-no matter how trivial or large-the police intervene...Any repetition of the past attitude and conduct by the police will meet with stern action on the part of the elected ministers.⁹⁰

Ministers were also accused of attempting to gain control of the Public Service. The complaint against the ministers pertained to the efforts they made to have appointed to top posts persons they trusted to cooperate with them in pushing ahead with the development of the colony. On 26 July Dr. Jagan had complained

They have appointed a Civil Service Commission because they do not want us to have anything to do with the appointment of civil servants. We would like to have power to appoint our own people, who would be able to do our work.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ibid , p 5, para, 11

⁹¹ Ibid , p 5, para, 12

This was perceived as a serious assault on the doctrine of an impartial colonial civil service. Implicit in this demand was a complaint he later made concerning the tardiness with which certain critical aspects of the work of the Government was managed by some senior civil servants.⁹²

The Paper also referred to instances in which members of the PPP threatened to engage in public violence. The main allegation was that the PPP plotted to burn the city of Georgetown down. It is interesting to note that this allegation which was premised on an unusual upsurge in the sale of petrol in the city was made after the decision to move troops to the colony and suspend the constitution had already been made.⁹³

The White Paper also promised social and economic reforms. This was a very important aspect of Whitehall's strategy both for defusing resistance in the colony and reducing the influence of the PPP by relieving the conditions which created the colonial discontent which the PPP exploited. The success of this programme was as critical in the short term as it was in the long run to HMG plans for post-invasion Guiana. HMG was very concerned that her cause could not be served by further alienating this colonial dispossessed. It was however also firmly believed that British interests would not be served if the PPP was allowed to retain its influence and supporters. HMG therefore undertook to effect radical changes in the socio-

⁹² Ibid , p 8, para, 23

⁹³ HCD, 521, 26 November 1953 83-84

economic condition of the colony even as it attempted through military and magisterial action to reduce the influence of the party.

The Campaign Against the PPP, 1953-1955.

While attempting to reform the social and economic environment of the colony, Whitehall was also attempting to dislocate the functioning of the party which it feared controlled the colony. Some officials within the "B" department reasoned that the Emergency in British Guiana and the presence of British troops in the colony provided HMG with an excellent opportunity to destroy the PPP. To them this was absolutely essential to facilitate the success of colonial policy during the period of the Emergency and to eradicate the communist organisation which threatened the growth of democratic institutions in the colony. This scheme acquired additional currency because with the leading members of the party at large, it proved somewhat difficult to contain disaffection and win the sympathy of the working people. Further, since British troops were operating in an alien terrain, it was too much to expect the soldiers to outmanoeuvre the PPP in effective propagandising of the competing points of view. The party's organisational structure had to be dislocated and its leadership immobilised. Yet HMG did not choose to outlaw the PPP.⁹⁴ It chose to isolate its leaders, terrorise its members and dislocate its organisational structure. In short they chose

⁹⁴ CAB 128/26, Minutes of Cabinet Meetings, No 33, 2 October, No 18, 8 October 1953 and No 58, 29 October 1953

"to smash the party completely."⁹⁵ To achieve this objective a variety of coercive and repressive measures were employed. The main device was a general wave of harassment of the leadership of the PPP which included searches, seizures, arrests, restrictions, banning and eventually imprisonment.

The programme seemed more concerned with the protection of the imperial image of Britain than with the realities of the Guiana situation. British forces were supposedly involved in crushing a communist resistance movement in the colony. Utilising the legitimacy which this cover provided British forces conducted its campaign against the PPP. The army also harassed all sections of the membership of the party particularly as this lent credibility to the original contention that an attempted communist coup was imminent and justified the presence of the troops in the colony.

The strategy of search, seizure and arrests had been suggested even before the actual invasion but the Governor had responded unenthusiastically. He had been ordered to **"place the dangerous leaders of the PPP under restraint and to raid their premises for incriminating documents."**⁹⁶ The Colonial Office seemed convinced that the PPP had been preparing for an anti-colonial war. The Governor was unimpressed and had tried to persuade his superiors in the Colonial Office that there were no grounds for the arbitrary actions contemplated. He even argued that such actions

⁹⁵ Ibid and CO 1031/1171 Internal Memorandum, Rogers to Lloyd, 16 October 1953

⁹⁶ CO 1031/1172 Secretary of State to Savage, No 21, 24 September 1953

might very well precipitate violence as there would then be **"the danger of hostile crowds attempting to stage a rescue"** of their leaders.⁹⁷ He drew attention to the disadvantages attendant on such measures when real justification was lacking. He advised that **"such actions in cold blood...might turn sections of the public opinion against us"**.⁹⁸ He insisted that no mention of arbitrary arrests or searches be made in the statements to be issued to the public.⁹⁹ Reluctantly the Colonial Office was forced to concede the point insisting nevertheless that such an exercise be implemented as soon as British troops were strategically deployed.¹⁰⁰

Immediately on arrival the security forces had constructed a comprehensive surveillance network around the leaders of the PPP who continued about their work among the people with sufficient zeal to warrant a stern rebuke to the Governor from the Colonial Office. Savage was asked to justify newspaper reports that **"the extremists of the PPP have a free hand to encourage strikes and create a situation which might endanger public order"**.¹⁰¹ This rebuke came seven days after the deployment of British troops throughout the colony. At that stage the Colonial Office was made to appear a little less than astute. Given the nature of the charges against the PPP, the deployment of troops, the

⁹⁷ Ibid , Savage to Secretary of State, No 71, 1 October 1953

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Ibid , Secretary of State to Savage, No 71 7 October 1953

¹⁰¹ CO 1031/1172 Secretary of State to Savage, No 124, 16 October 1953

dismissal of Ministers and the revocation of the constitution HMG was not happy to explain in Parliament how a strike could be called in the sugar belt by the very persons charged with planning, first, the destruction of the city by fire then a communist takeover of the colony.

The allegations levelled against the PPP were so extensive that preventive detention and criminal prosecution of the perpetrators were the least to be expected. The international community, and especially the colonised world, anxiously awaited the legal proceedings but learned opinion warned the Secretary of State that it would be most "embarrassing for a judge thereafter to have to say whether matters set out in the White paper can or cannot be substantiated".¹⁰² The Colonial Office was quick to recognise this polite rebuke, coming as it did from a distinguished jurist who subsequently chose to distance himself from leading the commission to investigate the emergency. This legal opinion added considerably to the discomfiture of the Colonial Office at a time when they had still to marshall enough credibility to avert loss of face in the parliamentary debate which was only a few days away.

In those circumstances therefore a still free, active and very militant PPP was an embarrassment of tremendous proportions. It was at this stage, that Colonial Office policy transformed itself from one of veiled aggression to one of naked attack against the PPP. Rogers declared,

¹⁰² CO 1031/1179, Lord Morris to Oliver Lyttelton, 17 November 1953

Once we have entered into open conflict with the PPP and taken the first step, it seems to me that the right course is to go hard at it and smash the party completely.¹⁰³

In a most caustic comment he observed, "the Governor merely seems to me to be presenting them with an admirable rallying cry and giving them too much scope to proclaim it".¹⁰⁴

Under these pressures the Governor's resistance wavered and he issued the first detention orders some two weeks after British troops had been deployed.¹⁰⁵ Those detained in this group were Sydney King, former Minister of Communications, Richard Rory Westmass, Vice-President of the PPP, Martin Carter, Assistant Secretary, Samuel Lachhmansingh, MLA and Adjodha Singh, MLA. These men were in one way or another connected to the leadership structure of the party, and more significantly, were all drawn from the radical arm of the leadership. This was a significant move by the Governor, since the conservative elements of the party had criticised these leaders for the communist influence they exerted on the supreme leadership of the party. The detention of this group therefore caused a minimum of political anger in the city but also undermined the effectiveness of the Jagan faction of the party. The subtlety of this move was lost

¹⁰³ CO 1031/1171, Internal Memorandum, Rogers to Lloyd, 16 October 1953

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

¹⁰⁵ CO 1031/1173, Savage to Secretary of State, No 171, 25 October 1953 and CO 1031/1171, Ibid, No 173, 26 October 1953

on the Colonial Office. For while it might hasten the fragmentation of the party, it would also not produce the insurgency needed to lend credence to Whitehall's case. They were not, in any case, the popular names in the party. Over the years, the press had created its own communist monsters in Guiana and these were the persons they expected to persecute if they were to be persuaded that something terrible was really happening in Guiana. The Colonial Office therefore expressed dissatisfaction with the arrests. They argued that although the initial group of detainees was from the leadership of the party, they were not from that select group considered most dangerous.¹⁰⁶ The response of the Governor, that he had not considered **"it expedient to detain Janet Jagan and other leaders at the present time"**, did not win the approval of London.¹⁰⁷ The ultimate goal of HMG policy could only be attained if the leadership structure of the party was truncated and nothing less would suffice in the circumstances.¹⁰⁸

Rogers in particular was furious and fulminated. The reports he had been receiving, indeed the very Governor's telegrams, had made it quite clear that Janet Jagan **"was the real brains behind the organisation."** It was therefore imperative that she be detained with immediate effect.¹⁰⁹ With the imminent approach

¹⁰⁶ CO 1031/1171, Rogers to Lloyd, 27 October 1953 (Internal Correspondence)

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, Savage to Secretary of State, No 193, 26 October 1953

¹⁰⁸ CO 1031/1172, Savage to Secretary of State, No 85, 7 October 1953, Secretary of State to Savage, No 71, 7 October 1953 and Savage to Secretary of State, No 90, 7 October 1953

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, Rogers to Lloyd, 27 October 1953

of the parliamentary debate the Secretary of State also expressed his displeasure with developments in the colony. He let it be known that he would be most embarrassed when confronted by the most obvious of questions, "why when others had been detained, the person regarded as the brains of the party is left free".¹¹⁰ The Governor was now under mounting pressure to produce detainees of a certain pedigree and Janet Jagan, whom the Colonial Office identified as the most dangerous of all the communists in the colony, was the prime target.¹¹¹ She was singled out more for her organisational and administrative capabilities than her ideological persuasion and it was believed that immobilising her would dislocate the organisation of the party.

Neither Jagan, Burnham, Chase, Jai Narine Singh nor Dr Lachhmansingh had been detained immediately. Jagan and Burnham subsequently travelled overseas to propagandise the Guiana case.¹¹² Jai Narine Singh had travelled to Venezuela, ostensibly for the same reason.¹¹³ King had been detained, leaving J.P.Lachhmansingh and Chase as the two remaining ministers still free in the colony. Together with Janet, they tried to keep the party together. Chase wrote the most compelling refutation of the charges essayed in the White Paper, while Janet called on all

¹¹⁰ Ibid , Secretary of State to Savage, No 27 October 1953

¹¹¹ Ibid and CO 1031/1173, Detention of Political Leaders Secretary of State to Savage, 29 October 1953

¹¹² They left Guiana 19 October arriving in London on 22 October They also travelled to India and Egypt before returning home in February 1954

¹¹³ CO 1031/782, Activities of Jai Narine Singh See particularly, Reuter, 0209, 19 November 1953 and Foreign Office to Ambassador, Caracas, No 131, 19 November 1953

her considerable organisational and diplomatic skills to preserve the integrity of the party.¹¹⁴ Because the effective decision making body, the party's Executive Council, had been reduced to a very small unit it was possible for them to meet in the most unusual of places and as a consequence the party's machinery continued to function with considerable efficiency.

It was well known that she was in constant touch with party cadres, keeping the frightened membership informed, mediating between rival groups within the party and in general, motivating and mobilising as before the invasion.¹¹⁵ But she was so well organised and her movements so well coordinated and expeditiously executed that she was able to elude military surveillance for much of the time.

It was especially during this critical period, when with the others out of the way and Janet Jagan seemed the only force uniting the party that Whitehall would have particularly preferred her incarceration. With the radical section of the party's leadership detained and the two charismatic leaders out of the colony, Whitehall reasoned that all that was necessary was to have Janet Jagan, the driving force behind the Party in jail and the Party would be particularly vulnerable and therefore easy

¹¹⁴ CO 1031/1173, Savage to Secretary of State, No 156, 20 November 1953

¹¹⁵ Ibid , Savage to Secretary of State, No 156, 20 October 1953, Ibid , No 164, 23 October 1953 and CO 1031/1187, British Guiana Situation Report Savage to Secretary of State, No 210, 15 October 1953

to destroy. The Governor was therefore pressed to arrest her on any charge likely to result in detention.¹¹⁶

The Governor was aware, more than the occupants of the Whitehall that, the lack of evidence apart, there was the difficulty of obtaining a conviction out of a local jury. In the first instance, there was the very likely reluctance among the local population to volunteer information to the colonial administration and fewer still would be willing to testify against a woman of Janet ^{Tagan's} stature.¹¹⁷ Even were irrefutable evidence available, the Governor was not persuaded that a water-tight case would produce the desired result in the charged atmosphere generated by the constitutional crisis.¹¹⁸ He succeeded in persuading his principals to this effect and they decided that in the circumstances a detention order against her would have to suffice.

The Governor was not particularly happy with this alternative either and it was in these circumstances that he had issued the first detention orders.¹¹⁹ There was reason to believe that the Governor's authority (considerably eroded even before the

¹¹⁶ Ibid Secretary of State to Savage, No 140, 21 October 1953

¹¹⁷ CO 1031/1173, Savage to Secretary of State, No 165, 23 October 1953 and No 173, 26 October 1953 See also Preparatory Notes for Secretary of State's response to a Parliamentary Question on 11 November 1953 in the House of Commons

¹¹⁸ CO 1031/1431 General Situation and Policy in British Guiana Savage to Secretary of State, No 235, 4 May 1954 and CO 1031/1555, Savage to Secretary of State, No 39, 11 March 1954 and No 48, 8 May 1954 See also, Deputy Governor to Secretary of State, No 40, 13 March 1954

¹¹⁹ CO 1031/1173 Detention of Political Leaders, Savage to Secretary of State, No 171, 25 October 1953

invasion) was being weakened further because of a conviction, within the Colonial Office, that a search on the premises of the PPP had failed to produce incriminating material, because of his reluctance and tardiness.¹²⁰ The search was conducted two days after the Emergency was proclaimed. The information reaching the Colonial Office suggested that, in the time it took to organise the raid, the leadership of the Party was able to destroy the incriminating evidence which Whitehall believed existed and which it so badly needed to prove its case of planned violence and an intended communist takeover in Guiana. There was considerable disappointment in Whitehall at this loss and the explanations offered by the colonial Governor did very little to mollify officials.¹²¹ Once again the Governor was put under intense pressure to apprehend the apotheosis of evil in Guiana, Janet Jagan, and once again he argued against taking such action.¹²²

The local situation was further complicated by the staging of a hunger strike by the first batch of detainees.¹²³ This act of protest was particularly eloquent as it was the sort of response associated with the much revered Mohandas Gandhi, taken under almost similar circumstances and against a similar foe.¹²⁴ There

¹²⁰ Ibid , Internal Memoranda, Rogers to Lloyd, 16 October 1953 and CO 1031/1187, Savage to Secretary of State, No 116, 14 October 1953

¹²¹ Ibid

¹²² Ibid , Secretary of State to Savage, 29 October 1953

¹²³ CO 1031/1187, Savage to Secretary of State, No 210, 20 November 1953

¹²⁴ CO 1031/1173, Secretary of State to Savage, No 207, 22 November 1953 and Savage to Secretary of State, No 218, 24 November 1953

was no disputing the impact of this action both on the local population and in the United Nations where India was recognised as an influential anti-colonial advocate and not surprisingly the Governor was very apprehensive of its consequence.¹²⁵ Whitehall, had over the years been very concerned about the influence of India as an anti-colonial crusader especially in colonies like Guiana where the Indian population was substantial and colonial administrators were constantly reminded to be wary of the activities of Indian Consulate officials visiting the colony. In Guiana such officials were kept under rigorous surveillance and their activities reported in great detail to London. HMG therefore appreciated the implications of a hunger strike among anti-colonial militants, particularly in circumstances as some of the militants were themselves Indians. HMG was not surprisingly concerned that such action should have come right in the midst of the House of Commons debate on the Emergency in the colony. The Governor was therefore requested to do all in his power to contain the situation and prevent any development which might embarrass the Conservative Party and government during the debate.¹²⁶

But this was only the opening thrust in a rebellion conducted from behind the bars of the colonial prison. They refused to meet the Advisory Committee for Detained Persons.¹²⁷ They

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ CO 1031/1173, Savage to Secretary of State, No 218 24 November 1953, No 219, 24 November 1953 and No 220, 24 November 1953

questioned the legality of their detention and that of the Committee which attempted to hear their cases. They refuted the basis and questioned the logic of the allegations. The attempt by the colonial administration to secure private hearings provided potent propaganda which was used against the administration as any attempt to deny the working people access was bound to be.¹²⁸

The resistance of the detainees was publicised in leaflets printed in the underground press which the colonial administration could not detect but nevertheless proceeded to ban.¹²⁹ Printing establishments were raided, literature seized and some businesses ordered out of operation under the duress of the Emergency Regulations but those oppressed devised adequate means of defeating the ban.

Finally on 12 July 1954, the activities of Janet Jagan, Ram Karran, Eric Huntley and Krishna Ramsarran were finally restricted.¹³⁰ They were required to confine their movements to specified geographical locations and to report twice weekly to the police station nearest to their homes. These restrictions, while seeming to satisfy the appetite of the principals in Whitehall for action against Janet Jagan, had very little effect

¹²⁸ CO 1031/1171 For the full text of these Statements, Sydney King to Chairman, Advisory Committee, 23 November 1953, Martin Carter to Chairman, Advisory Committee, 28 November 1953 and Rory Westmass to Chairman, Advisory Committee, 30 November 1953

¹²⁹ Ibid, Savage to Secretary of State, No 138, 17 October 1953 Savage reported that this Order had been made and held in readiness. The fear that the actions of the detainees would provoke a breach of the peace prompted him to issue the Order

¹³⁰ CO 1031/1202, Savage to Secretary of State, No 455, 12 July 1954

on the organisational capacity of the prime target of Colonial Office policy of repression in the colony.¹³¹ In a small colony, such as Guiana, where there was a high degree of mobility between the rural and urban community, the free flow of party information and political propaganda continued apace.

Between October 1953 and June 1954 nearly every conceivable leader of the PPP was detained on one or more occasions.¹³² The initial reluctance displayed by the colonial Governor between October and December 1953 broke under Colonial Office pressure and was replaced by an aggressive assault against nationalist forces in the colony. Homes and offices were invaded and ransacked, persons detained without charges being brought against them and many imprisoned. The arbitrariness of these measures disconcerted everyone, particularly those who were not politically active.¹³³

Whitehall did not confine its repressive activities to the leadership of the Party but undertook to proscribe all organisations related, however peripheral, to the PPP. Over the months, a number of organisations, believed to be affiliated to the PPP, were also banned.¹³⁴ Among the more notable of these

¹³¹ CO 1031/1431, Savage to Secretary of State, No 163, 4 April 1954

¹³² Ibid

¹³³ One conservative newspaper accused the police of having " let loose a campaign of naked brutality against private citizen " The Clarion, 14 July 1954

¹³⁴ CO 1031/1202, Savage to Secretary of State, No 455, 12 July 1954, Ibid , Guiana Diary, 18-31 December 1954 and 12 July 1954

organisations were the British Guiana Peace Movement, the Pioneer Youth Movement, the Demerara Youth Movement, the Union of Progressive Youth, the National Assembly of Rural Youth, the National Committee of Rural Youth, the Guiana Union of Patriotic Youth, and the People's Youth Movement. The assault on organisations catering for the needs of youths was particularly significant in British Guiana where the bulk of the population was under the age of twenty five years. What was more this bulk was made up primarily of Blacks and East Indians who constituted the backbone of PPP support. Youth organisations were very effective agencies for recruiting, politicising and mobilising for the nationalist brigade.

The Visit of the Leaders of the PPP to London: October 1953.

It was no easy task getting out of Guiana and over to London. The fact that the Guiana delegation of Jagan and Burnham were attempting to arrive in London in time for the debate of the Government White paper created some uneasiness on the part of the British authorities. Airlines were made to feel that it would be considered an act of friendship if the passage to London was made as difficult as possible.¹³⁵ Neither the American carrier, PANAM, the British carrier, BOAC nor the French carrier, Air France would accept the Guiana delegates.¹³⁶ Passages were therefore not easily available and when they became available stopover points in the Caribbean were closed to the PPP. They

¹³⁵ CO 1031/1183, Savage to Secretary of State, 13 October 1953 See, Spinner, 45-46 and Jagan, The West On Trial, 127-128

¹³⁶ Ibid

were denied entry into Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados and they were refused transit visas by the United States, France and Holland.¹³⁷ In the end the Dutch carrier KLM undertook to issue tickets to the two when the Surinam government issued them, with an in-transit stopover facility.¹³⁸ But even so it was necessary for them to charter a private plane to Surinam to join the Dutch carrier.

On arrival in the United Kingdom, audience was denied them by both the main political parties and of course the Colonial Office. Allegations had been made and the accused had been found guilty in absentia. Neither the Conservative nor the Labour Party seemed particularly keen to hear the Guiana case.¹³⁹ Cabinet decided that Jagan and Burnham should not be accorded official status and should be denied a meeting with the Secretary of State.¹⁴⁰ If the official audience was unresponsive, unofficial audiences seemed eager to listen to the Guiana representatives. They took their case to the British public and then to Ireland. The popular appeal of the speakers forced the National Executive of the Labour Party to meet the delegates but the meeting was a disaster.¹⁴¹ Jagan subsequently complained that the Labourites were most hostile. They had already been converted to an acceptance of the allegations in the

¹³⁷ Ibid

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ Jennie Lee, "Foreword" Jagan, What Happened in British Guiana, and Spinner, 54

¹⁴⁰ CAB 128/26, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, No 45, 13 October 1953

¹⁴¹ Jagan, The West On Trial, 128

White paper and were not prepared to tolerate the communist. Labour was also resentful of the fact that the PPP and the British Guiana Trade Union movement, with the exception of the MPCA, did not belong to the ICFTU and that the PPP remained a strong supporter of the WFTU, a factor, which in the estimation of some sections of the Labour Party, removed any lingering doubts about the communist leanings of the PPP.¹⁴² The Labour Party thereafter forbade its members to support Guiana's case.¹⁴³

But to the chagrin of the Colonial Office, the Guiana case was effectively presented and won receptive audiences throughout the British Isles. The result was mounting criticism on the Government to justify its actions in Guiana.¹⁴⁴ The Colonial Office response to the demands of the press and MPs of all parties was weak and ineffectual.¹⁴⁵ It sponsored a small group of Guianese political aspirants to rebut the case presented by the Jagan and Burnham delegation and they failed. Those selected to present the other side of the Guiana case were John Fernandes, popular businessman and ex-legislature representative, W.O.R. Kendall, the leader of the Opposition in the deposed Legislative Council, John Carter, defeated NDP candidate and Georgetown lawyer, John St. Dare, Georgetown businessman and Lionel Luckhoo.

¹⁴² CAB 128/26, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, No 45, 13 October 1953

¹⁴³ Ibid, 133, Oliver Lyttelton, Viscount Chandos, The Memoirs of Lord Chandos, (London 1962), pp 427-430

¹⁴⁴ CO 1031/1183, Rogers to Lloyd, 29 October 1953, in which he confessed that the Burnham-Jagan campaign was doing severe damage to HMG's case

¹⁴⁵ Question Time, Wedgwood Benn, F P Bishop, William Hamilton, A Lewis, G Longdon and S Silverman HCD, 518, 28 October 1953 376-378

With the exception of Kendall, these gentlemen were all without political constituencies in Guiana but they still believed that they were better qualified to speak on behalf of the colony. They were therefore quite willing to challenge the impression which both Jagan and Burnham had created before public audiences and particularly the impression they created in the British media.¹⁴⁶

The Colonial Office arranged a series of speaking engagements, press conferences and press releases. Officials were however wary of the reception the group would receive if the source of its sponsorship became public knowledge.¹⁴⁷ In the circumstances the joint sponsorship of the Labour and Conservative parties was arranged for them.¹⁴⁸ But the public performance of the group was unimpressive. In the first instance they repeated the same charges which had been aired previously and which had failed to satisfy the curious. They took nothing new to their audience and could shed no light on any of the unanswered questions which excited the imagination of the press and public. For another they were required to follow in the wake of two very impressive speakers, who were motivated by a deep sense of outrage and whose oratorical skills, no less than their grasp of the salient facts were superior to any on show in Britain. No one in the group

¹⁴⁶ Ibid

¹⁴⁷ Ibid , C Y Carstairs to P Rogers, 2 November 1953

¹⁴⁸ Ibid , Rogers to Lloyd, 29 November 1953 and Rogers to Watson, 30 October 1953

with the possible exception of Luckhoo had any skills as a public speaker and even he was less than equal to Burnham.¹⁴⁹

But while their public performance may have been disappointing the same could not be said of their private consultations with the principals in the Colonial Office. They came equipped with a formula for ridding Guiana of its "red menace" and presented their case with considerable gusto. Their programme called for the immediate banning of communists and communists' organisations in the colony, withholding the franchise from known communists, withdrawing adult suffrage, providing technical and financial support for opposition parties and for acceptable trade unions, promoting an aggressive social and economic programme in the colony particularly in housing, roads, pure water supply and minor industries, providing an improved allowance for overseas students in Britain so as to reduce their vulnerability to the enticements of communist' organisations in the United Kingdom, offering appropriate appointment to Guianese who successfully complete their studies abroad to prevent them joining the PPP and strengthening the Security Department of the Police force so that they might better be able to cope with the communist threat in the colony.¹⁵⁰

The backwardness of major aspects of these proposals derived as much from the fact that the proponents were a group of extreme

¹⁴⁹ The Daily Telegraph, 23 October 1953, The Manchester Guardian, 29 October 1953, The Daily Worker, 6 November and The Daily Argosy, 6 November 1953

¹⁵⁰ CO 1031/1183, Luckhoo to Lyttelton, 20 October 1953

conservatives, frightened by recent democratic developments in the political culture of the colony, and anxious to ingratiate themselves with the Colonial Office through which route they hoped either to retain political favour or to become the new recipients of political patronage. But as much as it may have detested communism, Whitehall was no more prepared to ban communism in Guiana than it was capable of outlawing it in Britain.¹⁵¹ On the other hand the Colonial Office was most reluctant to be committed to a reduction of the franchise. Officials were however quite prepared to leave the decision to the commission whose report would depend on the nature of the depositions placed before it.¹⁵² For the rest, the Colonial Office indicated its primary aim was the destruction of the PPP and to this end it was prepared to encourage the formation of a strong and efficient party machinery to subvert the membership of PPP and prosecute the anti-communist campaign in the colony.¹⁵³ The Colonial Office might have had its misgivings about the sponsored visit of these pseudo-politicians but the aspirants had no such worries.¹⁵⁴ They returned to Guiana with a new resolve to organise and disengage the PPP from its popular support.

The Parliamentary Debate, October-November 1953.

¹⁵¹ CO 1031/1183, Internal memorandum, A Barton to Mayle and West, 6 October 1953

¹⁵² Ibid , Mayle to Savage, No 21 December 1953

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Ibid , Luckhoo to Mayle, 18 October 1953

The first real challenge to the decision to send troops to Guiana came in the form of a Parliamentary Question. In the preparation of a response for the question, **On what date did he first receive the recommendation from the Governor of British Guiana that the constitution of Guiana should be suspended?**¹⁵⁵ the Colonial Office and the Secretary of State for the first time reflected on the process leading up to the decision to withdraw the constitution in British Guiana and realised that the Governor had never made such a request.¹⁵⁶ This realisation seriously disconcerted the principals in the Colonial Office.

As they agonized over the process through which that decision was taken they discovered that they had responded to information received from various sources other than the colonial Governor. The despatches given considerable weighting were received from Tommy Luke, Comptroller, Development and Welfare, West Indies and an assortment of reports concerning the Sugar strike and an abortive attempt to organise a sympathy strike on 22 September. On the strength of these reports the Secretary of State had concluded that he possessed enough evidence to justify the severe measure he undertook. He therefore took the decision to suspend the Guiana constitution on 23 September and duly informed the colonial Governor on the 24 September. But even then the Governor had not responded to the information. He did however obey the instructions and it was only because he obeyed the

¹⁵⁵ HCD , 521, 23 November 1953 85

¹⁵⁶ CO 1031/1170, Internal memorandum, Vernon to Mayle, 24 November 1953

instructions contained in the despatch and from this that his support for them was assumed.

Recognising their dilemma the Colonial Office decided to deceive the House.¹⁵⁷ It was necessary to do so, in the opinion of Whitehall, to perpetuate the belief that the Governor had requested the actions taken by HMG in Guiana rather than face further ridicule in the House from the Labour Party, which had already tabled a Motion questioning the prudence with which HMG had responded to the emergency in the colony. The real implications of this process as we shall see was that the simple use of the Governor's reserve powers, or any of the alternatives available to HMG were never properly considered. This was an omission which the Conservatives could not convincingly defend in subsequent parliamentary debates.

When the House of Commons considered the emergency on the 22 October 1953, the debate was based almost exclusively on the information communicated in the White Paper.¹⁵⁸ The discussion centred on a motion from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Oliver Lyttelton, "That this House approves the action of Her Majesty's Government in British Guiana"¹⁵⁹ and an amendment moved by Mr James Griffiths, the former Secretary of State for the Colonies, "That this House, while emphatically deploring the

¹⁵⁷ HCD , 521, 23 November 1953 85-86 Secretary of State responded, "The decision to suspend the Constitution was taken on a series of reports by the Governor over a period which indicated quite clearly that the situation was progressively and rapidly deteriorating "

¹⁵⁸ HCD , 518, 22 October 1953 Columns 2159-2284

¹⁵⁹ Ibid , 2159

actions and speeches of some of the leaders of the People's Progressive Party in British Guiana as set forth in the White Paper, Command Paper No. 8980, and condemning methods tending to the establishment of a totalitarian regime in a British Colony, nevertheless is not satisfied that the situation in British Guiana was of such a character as to justify the extreme step of suspending the constitution."¹⁶⁰

It was immediately clear that both sides of the House were agreed on the condemnation of the PPP government. Labour tried to distinguish itself from the Conservative government by withholding complete endorsement of the actions taken by HMG, which it condemned as excessively strong and precipitate.¹⁶¹ The debate proceeded along the two distinct lines. The Conservatives argued that a communist threat to peaceful government existed in Guiana and HMG fearing a repetition of what had occurred elsewhere in the Empire thought it best to introduce British troops and withdraw the constitution. The executive of the Labour Party accepted the allegation of a communist insurgency in Guiana but disagreed with the withdrawal of the constitution.

The Secretary of State claimed possession of overwhelming evidence of a PPP purpose "to turn British Guiana into a

¹⁶⁰ Ibid , 2195

¹⁶¹ The Secretary of State in his Memoirs poured was contemptuous of Labour's position which it attributed to division with the party over the PPP's continued relations with the WFTU. He added that the Conservatives were let off by the division within the ranks of the Labour Party. Lyttelton, pp 428-429

totalitarian state" under the domination of "communist ideas, whose whole political, industrial and social life would be concentrated in the hands and in the power of one party".¹⁶² He displayed the telegrams of support from Adams, Bustamante and Manley, all respected political leaders in the region.¹⁶³ He acknowledged that the situation had produced a severe setback for HMG's policy of constitutional devolution, but primary consideration, he argued, had to be given the overriding commitment to maintain law, order and good government. Constitutional advance had for the time being failed in Guiana, but HMG was not prepared to tolerate the setting up of a communist state in a British colony and was confident that the House supported HMG on that goal. He argued that there was no realistic alternative to suspension of the Constitution in Guiana. The Governor's reserve powers were considered and because they were inadequate they were rejected. For the Governor to have attempted to carry on government by means of his reserve powers would have been to by-pass all the other provisions of the constitution and this would have reduced the Governor to involvement in party politics which was unacceptable.

He accused the opposition who, by their amendment, indicated an acceptance of the premises upon which the Government had based their actions while displaying a reluctance to embrace the conclusions or to support those actions. But he admitted that the justification for military intervention derived not from

¹⁶² Ibid , 2162

¹⁶³ Ibid , 2160

incidents portending lost of life or damage to property but rather from the threat to produce such results. It was the quick and emphatic response of the UK government which forestalled such developments.

In concluding his address the Minister gave some indication of the future course of events in the colony. He promised a return to a period of direct rule by officials assisted by an organ representing Guianese opinion upon whose advice the Governor might rely, but on whose advice he would not be bound. He refused to signal any indication as to the length of this period of constitutional retrogression. He did however confess that the time might be influenced by the report of a commission which was in the process of being sent out.¹⁶⁴

James Griffiths, one of the main speakers for the Labour Party opposition, shared the conviction that the leadership of the party were communists who adopted tactics "which have led in other countries to the establishment of a totalitarian communist state".¹⁶⁵ As he saw it however, the real issue was whether, when the constitution had been suspended, those actions and policies for which the PPP stood accused were of such a character as to justify suspension. He had no sympathy for them but he was not convinced that the Secretary of State had acted judiciously in suspending the constitution. He was therefore concerned about

¹⁶⁴ Ibid , 2179

¹⁶⁵ Ibid , 2180-2195 but particularly 2186 The former Secretary of State and Member for Llanelli was here quoting from Mr Lyttelton's speech and demanding that Lyttelton present the proof to support the allegation

the fate of future constitutional development in the colony. He reasoned that since the Police and the local Militia were under the control of the ex-officios, he could not accept that there was indeed a need for military intervention. And even if a case could have been made for the movement of troops to Guiana, the suspension of the constitution was still unacceptable to the Labour Party. He also drew attention to the fact that the other checks provided in the constitution were not activated when trouble was first detected in the colony and demanded an explanation of the reluctance of the colonial Governor, in the circumstances, to make use of his reserve powers. He criticised the Secretary of State for by-passing all the preliminary steps and measures which could have saved the constitution and indeed the government. Suspension, which should have been the last resort, was the first and only resort of HMG's Secretary of State.¹⁶⁶

The PPP delegation was disappointed with the former Secretary of State's uncritical support for the case as set out by his opposite number but it was the former Labour Prime Minister's speech which produced the greatest setback for the party.¹⁶⁷ Clement Attlee attacked the PPP leadership for being either communists or the dupes of communists. In his opinion they had squandered a wonderful opportunity. He reiterated the stand of his party in its acceptance of the case as presented by HMG but

¹⁶⁶ Lyttelton claimed that Griffiths' weak performance justified the sobriquet given him by his own side of "the Minister of Tears" Lyttelton, p 429

¹⁶⁷ Ibid , 2261 to 2268

like Griffiths, rejected the government's handling of the emergency. There were other more appropriate methods which should have been employed. The government, he charged, had brought in the last thing they should have done first.

Harold Macmillan closed off the debate for the Conservatives. He claimed that one of the crucial issues arising out of the many speeches was whether the government had produced enough evidence to support the action it had taken. A second was whether those measures had been taken prudently and efficiently so as to minimise the risks of violence, and the loss of life and property. The third and, in his opinion, most important issue was whether the government had the right and duty, even at the cost of a temporary suspension of the constitution, "to prevent its reality from being undermined from the misuse of its form". He was satisfied that even though the charges, individually were none of them sufficient in itself to justify the serious course which the United Kingdom government adopted, together they constituted a very conclusive case for drastic action of the kind taken. He noted that all were agreed that the PPP had been guilty of grave crimes of mismanagement and planned terror. HMG's actions had vindicated itself in that it had succeeded in preventing a breakdown of law and order.

The performance of the Secretary of State as he belaboured the alleged threat of a communist insurgency, transformed an imaginary tale into a proven case without recourse to the rules of evidence and the burden of proof. Both parties united against

the anti-communist insurgency in Guiana and displayed sterile regard for all other issues. With such a reprieve, the Conservatives were permitted to engage in peripheral debate on the severity of the punishment rather than the substance of the crime. There was a division of the House but the Government motion was carried with the support of the Liberals.

With all its shortcomings what explains the ease with which the Secretary of State was able to secure approval for Whitehall's actions in the colony?¹⁶⁸ Legitimacy was secured in the first instance by the skilful manipulation of the communist threat in an age when anti-communism was fashionable.¹⁶⁹ This was not just a British phenomenon. It was even more fashionable in the United States but the British had acquired a distinction for exploiting this ruse to legitimise the suppression of radical nationalism.¹⁷⁰ It was not unusual therefore for Colonial dissent to be attributed to Communist instigation and then to have nationalists rendered vulnerable when deemed the agents of international communism.

¹⁶⁸ Lyttelton subsequently that this was the high point of his career. He concluded, "Parliamentary parties are prepared to support drastic and unpopular action if they think it right but when that action gives them a happy experience they positively purr." Lyttelton, p. 430

¹⁶⁹ 844C 00B/2, J. Edgar Hoover to Hon. Adolf A. Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary of State, 29 June 1942, 544C 504/1. Specialist Report by Perry N. Jasper completed on 30 November 1935, 751B 001/1-1052. Stephen N. McClintic to The Department of State, No. 60, 10 June 1952, 741B 001/1-1653, Mr. Christensen to Mr. Robbins, 16 January 1953 and Cabinet Document, No. MCM, 19 December 1949. For the position of British Guiana in the overall scheme of things, see CO 1031/120, F. Robinson to Sir Winston Churchill, 15 September 1953. For a general reader on the topic, see, Robert J. Wilson, America and the Cold War, (New York 1969).

¹⁷⁰ DEFE 11/33, Burney to Secretary of State, 30 May 1949 and CO 537/5812, Arden Clarke to Secretary of State, January 1950. "General Strike, January 1950, Gold Coast" and FO 371/100732, Sir R. Urquhart, Caracas, to A. Eden, 12 January 1954.

What was particularly convenient for the Secretary of State was the fact that both the former Secretary of State, James Griffiths and Clement Attlee, the former Prime Minister were committed cold war warriors.¹⁷¹ The influence which these men wielded in the hierarchy of the Labour Party explained the response of that organisation to the communist threat presented by the Secretary of State. Additionally the United States which had established its hegemony in the region was strongly opposed to the possibility of communist penetration into the region.¹⁷² Given the nature of American capital investments in the area, the geopolitical sensitivity of the region as the American backyard and its strategic importance located as it was in such close proximity to the approaches to the Panama Canal it was not surprising that American apprehension should make its presence felt in the decision making corridors of Whitehall.¹⁷³

But even though the Americans welcomed British intervention they were disappointed by its lack of finesse. It was only because of the Communist threat which they were convinced the PPP represented that they supported HMG's actions and undertook to

¹⁷¹ This topic receives insightful treatment in, Kenneth Harris, Attlee, (London 1982)

¹⁷² 75IB 00 1/1-1052, Stephen Mc Clintic to The State Department, No 60, 10 June 1952 and 741B 00/1-1653, Mr Christensen to Mr Robbins, 16 January 1953 See also, 511 41G 5/9-353, Perry N Jester to The Department of State, No 14 3 September 1953

¹⁷³ CO 1031/120, F Robinson to Sir Winston Churchill, 15 September 1953 FO 953/1527, Report of a Meeting of the USIA and British Embassy officials concerned with Latin America, 14 January 1954,

reduce the effects of negative political responses to an act they considered both crude and poorly orchestrated.¹⁷⁴

The Constitutional Commission Report 1954

In a further effort to vindicate its actions in Guiana, Whitehall attempted to mount a commission of inquiry into the situation leading up to the invasion but Lord Morris countenanced prudence.¹⁷⁵ In refusing to chair the commission, he pointed out that an enquiry of that nature would first and foremost be an inquiry into the allegations against the Ministers and in the light of so many persons being "detained but not arrested" he was inclined to think that there was a dearth of evidence and an incapacity to obtain a conviction.¹⁷⁶ In essence, he argued, an enquiry would be put into "the difficult position of, in effect, trying Ministers in regard to matters, some of which might, if evidence were available, be the subject of charges".¹⁷⁷ The Colonial Office had been less apprehensive and had hoped to have the PPP indicted and British actions vindicated by the inquiry, but as Morris pointed out, it "might be somewhat embarrassing for a judge" to be made to rule on the various allegations contained in the White Paper.¹⁷⁸ Properly chastened the Colonial Office decided on a commission which it asked

¹⁷⁴ 74ID 00/10-653, The Department of State to All American Diplomatic Posts in Other American Republics, No 150, 6 October 1953 and 74ID 00/10-953, The Department of State to American Embassies in London and Port of Spain, Nos 874 and 45 (resp), 9 October 1953

¹⁷⁵ CO 1031/1179, Lord Morris to Secretary of State, 17 November 1953

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Ibid

In the light of the circumstances which made it necessary to suspend the Constitution of British Guiana to consider and recommend what changes are required in it.¹⁷⁹

Prudence had triumphed but even so the terms of reference finally agreed upon were still flexible enough to suit the purpose of the Colonial Office. The Commission, comprised of Sir James Robertson, (Chairman), George Woodcock of the British TUC and Guianese jurist, Sir Donald Jackson with R.Radford, Principal Officer in the Colonial Office as the Secretary, was therefore permitted to make pronouncements and judgements unhindered by the strict rules of evidence and strength of proof.¹⁸⁰ It did not have to concern itself with the propriety or impropriety of the British intervention nor did it have to pass judgement on British actions in Guiana subsequent to the invasion. It was a very skilful way around the obstacles raised by the learned judge while retaining the desired ends.

Because it was a constitutional commission, it attracted a wider contribution from the local population than an inquiry into the British invasion would have attracted. Opposition elements in particular made full use of the forum to argue their case for a new constitution with very limited liberties.¹⁸¹ On the other hand because it was not a commission of inquiry into the events

¹⁷⁹ Ibid , Secretary of State to Savage, No 215, 1 December 1953

¹⁸⁰ CO 1031/1479 Robertson to Mayle, 19 March 1954 and Mayle to Sir C Jeffries, 9 April 1954

¹⁸¹ The Robertson Report 1954, p 70, para, 213

leading up to the suspension of the constitution, with powers to indict the British and vindicate the PPP government, the party refused to meet the commission. The PPP adopted the position that the Secretary of State, having already determined the constitutional arrangement to be imposed in Guiana, there was little to be achieved by appearing before the Commission.¹⁸²

The decision of the PPP was perhaps vindicated by the attitude of the Commissioners who even before the hearing began, were convinced that Guianese were politically and economically illiterate.¹⁸³ The Report^{was} made public on 2 November 1954 and from the nationalists' standpoint was not an improvement on the White Paper.

The Commission held sittings throughout the colony, received memoranda from individuals and groups and held both public and private hearings. Though several important organisations and individuals cooperated with the proceedings, the Commission failed to win the cooperation and participation of the popular organisations. Not surprisingly, in many respects the report followed the pattern established by the White Paper of 20 October 1953 which it accepted on face value and therefore arrived at conclusions without the benefit of compelling evidence. It gave credence to the charges of the White Paper and extended the range of those allegations. Then from this basis it proceeded to make recommendations which justified the actions taken by HMG in the

¹⁸² CO 1031/1443, Savage to Secretary of State, No 11, 8 January 1953 The Statement issued by the PPP on the Commission is enclosed

¹⁸³ CO 1031/1423, Robertson to Mayle, 19 March 1954

colony subsequent to the invasion. On balance it did neither the Commissioners nor the Colonial Office any real service. It identified communism as the greatest problem in Guiana and elected representatives as the greatest obstacle to constitutional and economic development.¹⁸⁴ But if new elections were permitted in Guiana the same persons would be reelected and so it recommended a postponement of the electoral principle and an indeterminable **"period of marking time in the advance towards self-government"**.¹⁸⁵

Unlike the Secretary of State, the Commissioners felt that over a period of time, overt Crown rule, in which the Governor administered the colony by decree would damage the image of the Governor and by implication the image of HMG, so an Executive Council with a balanced number of elected, official and nominated members would provide the mechanism for ensuring that **"the basic principles of democratic government are observed"**.¹⁸⁶ They recommended an Executive Council of ten members including the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Attorney General and the Development Secretary along with six Ministers chosen from among the unofficial members of the Legislature over which the Governor presided.¹⁸⁷ They recommended the retention of a State Council fashioned to achieve a closer working relationship with the Executive Council and therefore becoming an organ with

¹⁸⁴ The Robertson 1954, p 70, para, 212

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid* , para, 214

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid* , p 71, para, 218

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid* , pp 72-73, para, 223

a more positive role. To achieve this objective both the Financial Secretary and the Development Secretary were included among its membership. This move would, it believed, reflect the considerable importance which HMG attached to economic development during the interim period.¹⁸⁸ They also located within this Council seven others drawn from among the elected, nominated and official sections of the House.¹⁸⁹

The commissioners recommended that four elected Ministers should sit in the House of Assembly along with the Attorney General and the Financial Secretary, which triggered the Governor's demand for an expanded Executive, with elected Membership contrary to the original agreement with the Colonial Office.¹⁹⁰ The elected membership of the legislature would be increased from twenty four to twenty five thus providing a separate seat for the Rupununi District in the southern section of the colony.¹⁹¹ They declined to stipulate a definitive cut off point for the period of marking time, preferring to premise constitutional advance on the ability of the PPP to prove that it had purged itself of its communist leaders.

For the rest the Commission extended the policy of smashing the PPP completely. It advanced two strategies. In the first place

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ Ibid , p 72, para, 221

¹⁹⁰ CO 1031/1355, Savage to Secretary of State, No 98, 9 October 1954

¹⁹¹ Ibid , para, 222

it identified two categories of leaders in the PPP.¹⁹² There were moderates, like Burnham, Ashton Chase and Clinton Wong opposed to and by communists, like the Jagans, Benn, Carter, Westmass, and King.¹⁹³ Then it advanced the thesis that constitutional development should remain in a state of suspended animation until such time as the people of Guiana learned that HMG would never concede power to the PPP under the control of the latter group. It was therefore in their best interests to rid themselves of the communist leaders in the PPP.¹⁹⁴

The commission then attempted to reopen the leadership conflict between Jagan and Burnham by describing Burnham, the leader of the socialist section of the party as acceptable to Whitehall. Because of the demographic peculiarity of the support these leaders enjoyed it also introduced competition among the urban and rural sections of the party. These were serious contentions and no doubt in the long run they proved conducive to a split in the organisation of the party.

Whitehall hailed the Report, published in November 1954, in spite of its poverty of ideas, as justification for extending the course of reaction they had begun in October 1953.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Ibid , pp 36-37, paras, 101-104

¹⁹³ Ibid

¹⁹⁴ Ibid , p 74 para, 231

¹⁹⁵ CAB 128/26, Minutes of Cabinet Meeting where the Report was discussed and accepted No 49, 28 October 1954 and HCD, 532, 2 November 1954 212-214

Resisting the British Occupation.

When the troops had first arrived the PPP had advised against protest. The people had been advised to remain peaceful and calm.¹⁹⁶ The Governor had suspected as much when he advised against anticipating a rash response from the PPP. However it deprived him of the excuse he sought in an unthinking response from the party for a justification of the programme of repression. There was a solitary attempt to organise a sympathy strike but this had been called off.¹⁹⁷ Thereafter the party concentrated on warding off the attempts aimed at its destruction.

It was not until the return of Jagan to the colony on 17 February 1954 that the party considered a more militant offensive against the British and a vigorous programme of civil disobedience was orchestrated throughout the colony.¹⁹⁸ The security forces responded with the immediate detention of Jagan and Burnham who were both confined to the precincts of the city.¹⁹⁹ They were also required to report twice daily to the police station nearest to their homes. Jagan deliberately violated the order and was, not surprisingly, arrested.²⁰⁰ Upon learning of his arrest supporters of the party descended on the city and for the first

¹⁹⁶ Ibid , Savage to Secretary of State, No 158, 21 October 1953

¹⁹⁷ CO 1031/1187, Savage to Secretary of State, No 114, 13 October 1953 and CO 1031/1173, Savage to Secretary of State, No 164, 23 October 1953

¹⁹⁸ CO 1031/1187, Savage to Secretary of State, No 103, 11 October 1953 and CO 1031/1430, British Guiana Emergencies General Jackson to The War Office, 9 April 1954

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁰⁰ Ibid

time a serious breach of the peace was threatened. Released on bail, Jagan led an illegal procession which rapidly transformed itself into a protest march. He was rearrested and on this occasion refused bail.²⁰¹

When taken before the court Jagan seized the opportunity to put the intervention on trial and concluded his defence by ridiculing the very tribunal which heard his case. "I expect no justice from this or any other court. Justice has been dead since the British troops landed".²⁰² The court sentenced Jagan to six months imprisonment. Jagan used his stay in prison to instigate reforms within the institution and the authorities were only too happy to be rid of him. Janet Jagan was also imprisoned for breaches of the emergency. She had attended a wedding ceremony and a Riot Manual was located in her home.²⁰³

But in general the Colonial Office received very little comfort from the imprisonment of the nationalist politicians since in nearly every case imprisonment was related to a breach of the Emergency Regulations, as distinct from charges relating to the original allegations stressed in the White paper. In the case of Janet Jagan moreover the indications were that the violations

²⁰¹ Ibid , 15 April 54 and 20 April 1954

²⁰² CO 1031/1431 General Situation and Policy in British Guiana For all matters relating to Jagan's arrests, trial and imprisonment, see Savage to Secretary of State, Nos 163, 4 April 1954, 168, 5 April 1954, 170, 6 April 1954 and 171, 6 April 1954

²⁰³ CO 1031/1430, British Guiana Emergencies General Jackson to The War Office, 10 and 17 June 1954, 7, 14 and 29 July 1954, 3, 17 and 23 September 1954, 11 November 1954 and 29 January 1955

were contrived rather than committed.²⁰⁴ Janet Jagan was brought before the courts on two charges. The first was related to an address she was accused of making at a Hindu religious ceremony. It was in the nature of things that all such occasions were used for political gatherings but there was nothing to prevent this. The second charge stemmed from the discovery of a Police Riot Manual in her home which it seems likely had been secreted in her home by soldiers conducting an earlier search.²⁰⁵ She refused to pay the fines and went to prison. The defiance manifest in the refusal to pay a fine levied by a court acting under the Emergency Regulations or a deliberate attempt to create a breach of the order restricting a nationalist fighter to a specified area was perceived as one of the high points in the nationalists' struggle contributing substantially to the stature of the act and the actor.²⁰⁶

The campaign of civil disobedience continued throughout the colony and considerably aggravated the tension and acrimony between the nationalists and the conservatives.²⁰⁷ In the

²⁰⁴ The Guiana Graphic, 26 May 1954 and The Thunder, 29 May 1954

²⁰⁶ The Thunder, 29 May 1954

²⁰⁸ CO 1031/1431, Savage to Secretary of State, No 258, 14 May 1954, No 189, 12 April 1954 CO 1031/1430, General Jackson to War Office, 9 April 1954, 20 May 1954, 1 July 1954, 19 August 1954, 17 September 1954 and 11 September 1954 For a representative response from the conservatives see, CO 1031/1433, Worried Well Wisher to the Editor, The Daily Argosy, 14 July 1954 The writer complained that the leaders of the PPP were abusing the privileges of the Courts and that in Guiana there was Too much law and too little justice The writer demanded harsher penalties of the authorities to dissuade the people's representatives from taking their protest to the Courts

²⁰⁷ CO 1031/1433, 1954-1956 G B Buchanan to Secretary of Bookers Sugar Estates, 24 June 1954 in which he tenders his resignation due "mainly to the undercurrent of feeling against the staff on the estates "

beginning it consisted of a series of random work-stoppages, sick-outs and go slows at the work place. Later there were instances of verbal harassment and intimidation of officials and mili^tary personnel. Subsequently there was gross non-cooperation and the deliberate spreading of rumours of and acts of sabotage such as the burning of cane crops, destruction of bridges, kokers and sluices and the flooding of cane fields. The commu^lative effect of these acts were two fold. While they did not endanger life and limb, they nevertheless unsettled the European population and on occasion, embarrassed the military. On the other hand because the risks involved were marginal and the possibility of apprehension minimal the number of volunteers was large and the success of the programme a considerable boost to the nationalist morale.

There were several factors which facilitated the successful orchestration of this programme. In the first instance the society was very small and the organisation of the PPP very efficient in spite of the presence of the military. The Indians still spoke a variety of Indian dialects while the Black population spoke a form of creole which were utilised with considerable effect to disguise effective communication even in the presence of the enemy. But perhaps the most important advantage was the militancy of the female population, young and old, who seemed above the suspicion of the military and the local security forces. By the middle of 1954, therefore there were clear signs that the tension was having its effects on the

European community and particularly British citizens resident in the colony.²⁰⁸

Anti-white prejudice never far from the surface was first focused against British troops.²⁰⁹ Slogans such as "Limey go home" plastered throughout the colony were intended for the soldiers but eventually, aggressive epithets, nationalist in orientation but racist in form and content became commonplace.²¹⁰

European managerial and professional staff serving in the colony increasing^{ly} feared for their safety and that of their families.²¹¹ Overseers, the middle management staff, normally in charge of large groups of field workers were repeatedly assaulted while European mistresses complained about the undisguised hostility of domestic staff.²¹² The Church, as it became the focus of nationalist's resentment feared that it would be deserted by its congregation and the European magistracy felt threatened.²¹³ Neither their confidence nor morale was helped by frequent rumours, deliberately set in train, of planned debaucheries and

²⁰⁸ Ibid and Dr Uruske to R R Follett-Smith, 6 May 1954 in which he expresses fear "to continue in British Guiana " He complained that his car was attacked by school children simply because he was white For a similar reaction see, W Mailer to C A Brooke Smith, 2 July 1954

²⁰⁹ CO 1031/1430, 1954-1956 General Jackson to War Office, 9 April 1954

²¹⁰ CO 1031/1433, 1954-1956 Dr Uruske to Follett-Smith, 6 May 1954 and W H Mailer to C A Brooke Smith, 2 July 1954

²¹¹ Ibid

²¹² Ibid

²¹³ Ibid , Letter to the Editor, "Worried Well-wisher " The Daily Argosy, 14 July 1954

the frequent reports of assaults carried out on British soldiers about the country side.²¹⁴

The occasional incident of vandalism, arson or bombing, though isolated, brought no comfort to anyone and because the colony was below the level of the sea there was the constant fear of deliberate breaches of the sea defence system.²¹⁵

The security forces, including the soldiers, police, volunteer and the rural constabulary retained by the sugar estates, were kept busy throughout 1954 and into 1955.²¹⁶ The campaign did not show signs of abating until there were clear indications that the colonial authorities were prepared to return the colony to constitutional normality.

The campaign of civil disobedience was surprisingly effective registering in unambiguous terms the anger of the Guianese people at an injustice perpetrated against them by an imperial power. Yet right from the beginning the people were unarmed and never at any stage of their protest seriously considered acquiring arms preferring verbal abuse to physical attack. The most potent weapons used throughout the Emergency were a few sticks of

²¹⁴ CO 1031/1430, 1954-1956 General Jackson to War Office, 11 March 1954 in which he reported that five soldiers had been beaten up, and 22 March 1954 in which he reported a similar incident in addition to two stabbings

²¹⁵ Ibid , General Jackson to War Office, 20 April 1954, 26 May 1954, 13 May 1954 and 3 July 1954

²¹⁶ Ibid , General Jackson to War Office, 27 January 1955

dynamite stolen from the Public Works Department and the Molotov cocktail.²¹⁷

In the early months of 1955 there occurred a serious split in the Party when Burnham, Singh, Latchhmansingh and a few others departed.²¹⁸ In spite of its seriousness it was not altogether unexpected. The suspension of the constitution in 1953, the programme of harassment pursued by HMG throughout 1954, the activities of forces opposed to the nationalist movement and, particularly, the Robertson Commission Report created conditions and circumstances productive of a growing divide between Burnham and Jagan.

The differences between the two charismatic leaders of the nationalist movement was as old as February 1953 when Burnham first signalled his ambition to supersede Jagan as the leader of the movement. This ambition gave cause for much conciliatory activity among the leadership two months later when once again Burnham challenged Jagan for the leadership of the party . Since then it had been kept in check by Janet Jagan's skilful management of party affairs, a considerable degree of tolerance on the part of Jagan, who realised the significance of Burnham in the nationalist movement, but more particularly because for the greater part of the period mutual support was an essential prerequisite for their survival. However, the stresses and strains of the Emergency, the undisguised offer of preference to

²¹⁷ CO 1031/1433, 1954-1956 Follett-Smith to Campbell, 19 July 1954

²¹⁸ Ibid , No 14, 14 February 1955, No 15, 14 February 1955 and No 21, 20 February 1955

Burnham by the Commission and pressure from Black conservative and racist elements in Georgetown deliberately orchestrated and stoked Burnham's ambition.

In November 1954, therefore, with the top party members either detained or restricted, Burnham attempted to convene a party congress in Georgetown with the implicit intention to take over the party's leadership.²¹⁹ This initial effort was frustrated but Burnham persevered and a special conference was convened on 13 February 1955 in Georgetown where Burnham considered his support among the urban membership was strongest and where the Emergency regulations would inhibit the attendance of the rural membership. But because of these factors the Jaganites insisted that "Member's motions" and "Any Other Business" would not be placed on the agenda. In spite of this agreement however Burnhamite elements at the conference were allowed to table a motion of no confidence in the Party's executive. Burnham, as chairman, was warned of the irreparable harm the motion, if entertained at that time, would do to the party and the effectiveness of the nationalist struggle but he allowed the Motion. There followed a walkout by the Jaganites including, Martin Carter, Sydney King, Rory Westmass and Eric and Jessica Huntley, the leading Black nationalists in the movement.

Burnham was therefore unable to divide the party sufficiently to immediately threaten its dominance. Nevertheless the overall

²¹⁹ The split is well documented in the works of Drakes, Premdas, Hintzen and Jagan. For a day to day narrative account see, PPP, The Great Betrayal: A Full Account of the Events leading up to the Split in the PPP, (Georgetown 1955)

effects were, in the long run, far reaching and profound. For one thing, it divided and therefore weakened the nationalist movement and increasingly led to the polarisation of political activity along ethnic lines. Both effects were to the advantage of the British and they were not reluctant to exploit them.

Immediately after the split there was therefore some optimism that the fracture had weakened the party enough to permit a serious challenge from the others, but this was only momentarily.²²⁰ Nevertheless the Colonial Office was grateful that a breach had appeared in the working class combination. They were certainly happy that the division tended to be reflected in both a rural/urban split and still more, in a racial fracture between the Black/East Indian sections of the coalition.²²¹ But if this was good news, the Party had not been completely destroyed or the effective leadership displaced, and a general concern with the continuing hold of the PPP on its supporters therefore persisted among the official classes in the Colonial Office.²²²

By the last quarter of 1955, a Colonial Office reassessment of the Emergency concluded that it was counter-productive and impeded the successful application of other important aspects of

²²⁰ Ibid , Savage to Secretary of State, No 23, 10 March 1955 and No 24, 10 March 1955

²²¹ Ibid , No 16, 20 February 1955, A E V Barton (Secretary, West India Committee), to Rogers, 28 February 1955 Enclosed, Letter from Demerara, 24 February 1955 and Colonial Office Note by, K J Windsor, 23 June 1955

²²² Ibid , Savage to Secretary of State , No 27, 1 June 1955 and Internal memorandum, Windsor, 23 June 1955

Whitehall's strategy for political development in Guiana.²²³ For one thing, the Emergency Regulations, whilst failing to halt the political activity of the PPP in the colony's political life made it almost impossible for others to organise politically.²²⁴ The Colonial Office had hoped to sponsor a number of political parties during the period when the PPP was excluded from public office and political activity, hoping that they would make serious inroads into that Party's membership and support. They discovered that they had been achieving the opposite.²²⁵ Those sponsored and wanting a political audience could not get one because political assemblies were outlawed.²²⁶ Even the members of the Interim Administration, who enjoyed the advantage of official status and Colonial Office blessing, could not persuade the people to support them in the face of the repressive performance of British troops in the colony. The unimpressive performance of the Interim Administration was a similarly significant deterrent. In the circumstances, both were deprived of the opportunity to create political constituencies while the Emergency Regulations seemed not to have a similar effect on the unofficially outlawed PPP.

²²³ CO 1031/1432, F D Jakeway to Rogers, 1 September 1955 and Renison to Mayle, 22 June 1956 See also, CO 1031/1355, Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on the General Policy in British Guiana, 19 September 1955 Present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison

²²⁴ CO 1031/1541, Note by J K Vaughan-Morgan, 3 January 1955, OAG to Secretary of State, No 319, 27 June 1955 and CO 1031/1355, Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 19 September 1955 Present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison

²²⁵ Ibid

²²⁶ CO 1031/1541, Reuter Despatch, 18 April 1955, OAG to Secretary of State, No 319, 27 June 1955 and Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 19 September 1955 Present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison

Increasingly intense anti-colonial pressure, both at home and abroad, forced the administration to reconsider its policy.²²⁷ An important aspect of this policy retreat was the tacit acceptance of the failure of colonial policy in the colony.²²⁸ It was not difficult thereafter to persuade the Colonial Office that the time had come for the application of new policy initiatives in British Guiana.²²⁹

²²⁷ CO 1031/1429, Committee For British Guiana and Caribbean Democracy, 6 December 1953, Windsor to Cahill, 26 March 1954, Governor Savage to Secretary of State, No 280, 27 May 1954, No 299, Washington to Governor British Guiana, 6 August 1954, CO 1031/1540, The British Guiana Association for Colonial Freedom, 11 March 1954, The British Guiana Association and the Movement for Colonial Freedom

²²⁸ CO 1031/1355, Radford to Mayle, 18 January 1956

²²⁹ Ibid , OAG to Secretary of State, No 319, 27 June 1955 and Reuter's Despatch, 18 April 1956

CHAPTER FIVE.

THE FAILURE OF BRITISH POLICY IN BRITISH GUIANA, 1953-1957.

Introduction

In recognition of the state of underdevelopment in the colony and the fertile ground which this provided for social disaffection and political agitation, HMG undertook to provide a period of rapid economic development and social reforms in the wake of the October invasion. Additionally Whitehall hoped that conspicuous economic progress and social reforms would defuse colonial anger resulting from the suspension of the constitution and the dismissal of the PPP representatives. In order to ensure that the programme met with as little resistance as possible, while providing local support for the Governor and officials as well as a semblance of democratic coverage for continuing colonial administration in the colony, a select group of middle class representatives was nominated to the Executive and Legislative councils. This chapter focuses on this interim administration and its efforts to promote the programme of economic development and social reforms. Attention will also be directed to the various forms of responses to the administration, the emergence of an opposition to it and the eventual decision to return to democratic institutions in British Guiana.

The Interim Administration

When Whitehall undertook to move troops into British Guiana the Secretary of State secured Royal Assent for three documents which authorised the suspension of the Waddington Constitution,

proclaimed a state of emergency in the colony and varied the constitution to introduce Crown rule in the occupied territory.¹ Ministerial appointments were suspended and the membership of the Legislative and Executive councils purged.²

The Governor was granted full discretion in the exercise of all the powers conferred on him by the altered constitution. Whereas in the 1953 Constitution he was required to act on the advice of the Executive Council this was no longer a requirement. Subsequent Royal Instruments augmented these powers still further by providing him with extensive authority subject only to consultation with the Secretary of State and the assent of the Queen.³ But in addition to these powers, the declaration of a state of Emergency and the presence of British soldiers in the colony significantly increased the autocracy of Governor Savage.

The broad outlines of the administrative structure to be implemented in the colony had been enunciated both in the initial

¹ CO. 1031/1167, These instruments were obtained on 4 October 1953 and became active on the 8 October 1953. They were, **The British Guiana, (Emergency) Order-in-Council, 1953; The British Guiana (Constitution) (Amendment) Order-in-Council, 1953 and The Royal Instruments (Additional)**. See, CO. 1031/319, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 108, 13 October 1953, D.G.Gordon to F.W.Holder, 14 October 1953 and Secretary of State to OAG, No. 23, 7 January 1954.

² British Guiana Official Gazette, 9 and 10 October 1953; CO. 1031/319, Secretary of State to OAG, No. 23, 7 January 1954; CO. 1031/1167, British Guiana (Constitution) (Amendment) Order-in-Council, 1953 and Great Britain, Suspension of the Constitution, (London: HMSO, 1953). p. 12 para., 44.

³ British Guiana Official Gazette, 9 October 1953; CO. 1031/1167. Royal Instruments (Additional) Order-in-Council, 1953.

correspondence informing the Governor of the proposed intervention and during the Parliamentary debate of the Emergency. In subsequent discussions between the Governor and the Colonial Office, the administrative structure was further defined. They agreed on the exclusion of members of the PPP from both the Legislative and Executive Councils.⁴ Additionally, the Governor also argued that service in the Interim Government would jeopardise the political future of members of the smaller parties and the potential leaders of reasonable and responsible elements in the colony and so they were to be excluded as well.⁵

The Legislative Assembly was to be composed of twenty four members with a Speaker appointed by the Governor from outside the House.⁶ He proposed the appointment of a wholly nominated Executive Council consisting of from seven to ten members. Three or four seats in the Executive were to be allocated to the ex-officio members while the others were to be given to reliable members of the Legislative Council.⁷

Whitehall did not support an arrangement in which nominated members were fitted out with Ministerial portfolios so soon after

⁴ CO. 1031/406, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 237, 11 December 1953 and Secretary of State to Savage, No. 226, 22 December 1953.

⁵ CO. 1031/319, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 58, 27 September 1953 and CO. 1031/406, Rogers to Savage, 16 November 1953.

⁶ Ibid., Savage to Secretary of State, No. 58, 27 September 1953 and No. 63, 29 September 1953.

⁷ Ibid., Savage to Secretary of State, No. 58, 27 September 1953.

elected Ministers were dismissed and rejected the Governor's initial proposal when it was made in September.⁸ Subsequently, Whitehall conceded a very limited experiment in which not more than two such members would be given Ministerial posts but on the very clear understanding that their function was advisory and not executive.⁹ The Governor, appreciating that Whitehall intended to reintroduce Crown rule in the colony accepted this stipulation.¹⁰

The State Council was abolished since the purpose for which it had been intended in the former Government was no longer foreseen.¹¹ The ex-officios retained their former Ministerial portfolios with enlarged areas of competence, and all Members were empowered to introduce legislation except on matters pertaining to colonial finance, which were the preserve of the Financial Secretary and the Governor.¹²

The new government was announced on 27 December 1953.¹³ The three

⁸ CO. 1031/319, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 58, 27 September 1953; CO. 1031/319, Secretary of State to Savage, No. 173, 31 October 1953. CO. 1031/315, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 188, 2 November 1953 and Ibid., No. 247, 18 December 1953.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., Savage to Secretary of State, No. 118, 2 November 1953.

¹¹ British Guiana Official Gazette, 9 October 1953.

¹² Ibid., 10 October and 7 November 1953.

¹³ Ibid, 29 December 1953 and 2 January 1954; CO. 1031/416, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 253, 23 December 1953 and No. 256, 26 November 1953 and 741D. 00/1-1254, Maddox to The Department of State, No. 230, 12 January 1954. These documents

ex-officio members from the former Council, Chief Secretary, Mr John Gutch, CMG, OBE; Attorney General, Mr Frank Holder, QC and Financial Secretary, Mr F.O. Fraser OBE sitting with seven others made up the Executive Council. The others were Sir Frank McDavid, CMG. CBE., Member for Agriculture, Forest, Lands and Mines, the post held by Dr Jagan in the former Executive Council. McDavid was a prominent barrister-at-law, who as a nominated member, had been selected Minister without Portfolio and Head of the State Council in the previous government. His selection to the Interim Government was popular with the business community and the conservative elements in the colony but in common with all the others, it was unpopular with the electorate.¹⁴

Percival A Cummings, Member for Labour, Health and Housing had served in the State Council as a nominee of the Minority section of the House of Assembly. He was a barrister-at-law, who in the April 1953 election had received only 23 percent of the votes cast in his district. The seat had been won by Mr Van Sertima, PPP, with 46 percent of the votes cast. Mr van Sertima's seat was subsequently declared void after a successful legal challenge for an electoral malpractice from the opposition, but up to the time of the suspension of the constitution a by-election had not been arranged.

contain interesting biographical information on those nominated to the various organs. The section which follows depended to a large extent on these documents.

¹⁴ The Daily Argosy, 3 January 1954; The Daily Chronicle, 4 January 1954 and The Argosy, 7 January 1954 and CO. 1031/416, Internal Memorandum, Vernon to Mayle, 15 December 1953.

W.O.R. Kendall, elected member of the House of Assembly and Leader of the Minority group in the former Legislative Council, was a New Amsterdam businessman and a member of the three man UDP group which travelled to London to counter the anti-colonial sentiments generated by the Jagan-Burnham delegation. Kendall described himself as a loyal Kikuyu*, a statement that would have lost almost any other politician his seat in the colony but made little difference to his constituency.¹⁵

R.B.Gajraj, a nominated member in the State Council was a successful Georgetown businessman and a former Mayor of the Georgetown City Council. As the head of the Muslim League, he was prominent in East Indian affairs. H.Smellie, Director of several commercial and industrial firms was a nominated member of the pre-1953 Legislative Council. Like other big businessmen, Smellie realised that the success of his business could be enhanced by the patronage it received from the sugar industry. What was more he found it personally rewarding to be on good terms with the SPA and made no effort to disguise the fact that he was a client of Sugar.¹⁶ Rupert Tello, had succeeded Lionel Luckhoo as President of the much troubled sugar union, the MPCA. He was the Publicity Secretary of the UDP, a new coalition formed after the election. He however represented the NDP at the 1953 general election when he polled only nine percent of the votes cast in his constituency. The seat had been won by Chandra

* A faithful member of the British Empire.

¹⁵ The Daily Argosy, 6 November 1953.

¹⁶ The Guiana Graphic, 7 January 1954.

Persaud of the PPP, who was also an Executive member of the GIWU, with 30 percent of the votes. G.A.C.Farnum, a Georgetown businessman of moderate success, was a nominated member of the pre-1953 legislature, and like other city businessmen found it expedient to have the support of the sugar industry.

The appointments created much discontent within the ranks of the UDP which even though awarded three representatives on the Executive Council was not reluctant to criticise its composition. In a private letter to the American Consul General an unhappy member of the UDP, described the membership of the Council as "merely a nodding group of yes men".¹⁷

The disgruntled correspondent pointed out that the Member for Labour, Health and Housing had been unable to command support at the municipal election and had feared even worse at the general election. He was described as a man of very flexible political conviction who supported the passage of the Subversive Literature Bill only to denounce it a few months later when once the PPP had gotten into power. Gajraj was also criticised as a man of shifting political conviction and for not joining the resistance against the PPP. It was alleged that he had espoused great admiration for the PPP while it was in office, only to support the anti-PPP crusade after the party had been removed from

¹⁷ 74ID.00/1-1254, Maddox to The Department of State, 230, 12 January 1954. Enclosed Private letter, unsigned, to the American Consul General. Luckhoo was the only local politician on first name terms with the Americans. He was also known to have been in constant communication with them. The first name salutation and the tone of the letter have led me to believe that it was written by him.

office.¹⁸ Comments of a similar nature were heard throughout the colony and indicated the low esteem with which the appointees to the Interim Government were regarded generally.¹⁹

The Legislative Council was composed of Sir Eustace Woolford, OBE, QC., who retained his appointment as Speaker of the Legislature, and the ten members of the Executive Council. Others appointed to the Legislature were Reverend D.C.J. Bobb, pastor of the Methodist Church and a former member of the NDP who had been defeated by PPP member, Jane Phillips Gay, at the April 1953 general election where he polled only 15 percent of the votes. He had since transferred his loyalties to the UDP. C.A. Carter, who had served as an Independent in the 1953 legislature, after polling 36 percent of the votes in a constituency in which there were seven candidates vying for the support of the electorate. Carter was the Secretary of the British Guiana Mineworkers Union and an earlier member of the PPP.

Gertie Collins, deemed a social worker was a member of the executive committee of the UDP. She had been badly mauled by Ashton Chase in the general election, polling a marginal fraction over one percent of the votes in the Georgetown South constituency in which Chase polled 60 percent. E.F. Correia, member of the executive council of the UDP had been an elected

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The Daily Argosy, 28 December 1953 and The Daily Chronicle, 28 December 1953.

representative in the previous legislature. He had contested the election as an NDP representative, polling a healthy 60 percent of the votes cast in his constituency. Esther Dey, another self styled social worker and member of the executive of the UDP, was the headmistress of her own school.

Theophilus Lee, an old member of the Legislature, had served in the pre-1953 assembly and had subsequently retained his place as an Independent. Lee had been a member of the PPP but had defected before the elections. In the interim he had become a vice-Chairman of the UDP. W.T.Lord, DSO, was the Commissioner of Lands and Mines and had no record of overt political sympathy, as was to be expected of a senior colonial civil servant in a British colony.

Lionel Luckhoo, a nominated member in the State Council and of the pre-1953 legislature, was considered the driving force behind the formation of the UDP and served on its executive council. He was also a former President of the MPCA. Luckhoo fought his political battles in the diplomatic circles of Georgetown, where he enjoyed a very high profile in the British Embassy and the American Consulate. He also cultivated the friendship of senior officials in the Colonial Office. Luckhoo had been one of the members invited to boost Whitehall's image in London after the political presentations of Burnham and Jagan had destroyed the British case. Luckhoo was also one of the principal leaders in the local anti-communist crusade. Considered something of a political enigma in Guiana, the Colonial Office was willing to

consider him a serious political contender to displace Jagan and the PPP.

W.A.MacNie, CMG., OBE., was a member of the recent State Council and had served in the pre-1953 assembly as a nominated member. Throughout this period MacNie was the managing Director of the SPA and since the departure of Seaford, the representative of Sugar in the local assembly. W.A.Phang, a successful city merchant, was another former member of the Legislature having served in the two previous legislatures as an Independent. He had scored a very convincing victory in the North West District, a constituency in which the PPP was unorganised.

W.T.Raatgever, OBE., had been a nominated member of the pre-1953 Executive Council and a member in the recent State Council. Raatgever had a long and distinguished record of service to Sugar in the colony and was appointed the Deputy Speaker in the Interim Legislative Council. Dr H.A.Fraser, was a retired government veterinary surgeon, a successful cattle rancher and a plantation rice producer with no known political sympathies. Lt. Colonel Heywood, MBE., TD., was a businessman and commander of the British Guiana Volunteer Force. Rupert R Jailall, was the Secretary of the RPA and a plantation rice farmer. Hamid Rahaman, city businessman and nominated member of the former legislature, had been defeated in the 1953 election by the PPP candidate. He polled a mere four percent of the votes. J.I.Ramphal, was a barrister-at-law and Deputy Commissioner of Labour and Sugrim Singh, was a barrister-at-law and a defeated

candidate in the 1953 election when he mustered only three percent of the votes.

The legislature was therefore made up of five of the six minority members in the former legislature and six of the nine members of the former State Council. As had been agreed no member of the PPP was considered for appointment even though one, Jai Narine Singh, was reputed to have declared himself available.²⁰ While several of the leading personalities of the UDP refrained from serving in the Interim Government there were still eight members of the Party's executive in the Legislative and Executive Councils. Seven members of this legislature had been defeated at the 1953 election, five were defeated by humiliating margins. There were eight merchants, four barristers-at-law, three trade union officials, two ricemillers, two public servants, a minister of religion, a teacher and a managing director in the legislature. Looked at from the ethnic point of view the remodelled Executive Council was made up of three Africans, one East Indian, two Coloured and one European while the Legislative Council was comprised of five Africans, eight mulattoes, six East Indians, two Chinese and three Europeans. In spite of the number of East Indians among the appointees, there was no one among them with whom the peasant rice farmer and the sugar worker could identify. It was apparent that the Councils had recaptured the old middle class complexion lost in the 1953 election.

²⁰ CO. 1031/1187, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 100, 10 October 1953 and CO. 1031/1174, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 196, 10 November 1953.

An official American source reported that the PPP had described the gathering as "a rubber stamp". It pointed out that there was no one amongst the grouping strong enough to oppose British impositions and therefore defend the democratic rights of the colony against the invaders during the tenure of the interim administration.²¹

In the Colonial Office, J.W.Vernon was more pointedly critical. He argued that the East Indians were under-represented by one while the various other ethnic groups, Coloureds, Europeans and Chinese, were over-represented each by the same number. In the reconstructed Executive Council he identified four merchants, one barrister, one chemist and an ex-civil servant. He mustered very little charity for the personnel comprising the Interim administration.²² He considered the Councils an ill-conceived attempt to re-habilitate "the old gang" which had been discredited in the pre-1953 period. He identified five members of this grouping in the seven member Executive Council and twelve in the twenty four member Legislative Council. Vernon's analysis matched an earlier assessment by the Governor in which the performances of some of these persons in previous Executive and Legislative Councils were criticised.²³ What was more, travelling around the colony the Governor had grown to recognise

²¹ 741D. 00/1-1254, Maddox, (ACG) Port of Spain to The Dept. of State, No. 230, 12 January 1954.

²² CO. 1031/416, Internal memorandum, Vernon to Mayle, 15 December 1953.

²³ CO. 1031/123, "Note" by Alfred Savage in Savage to T.Lloyd, 13 September 1953.

the extent to which they were disregarded.²⁴ But neither factor prevented him from nominating them to the interim administration which revealed the administrative ambivalence which became a distinguishing feature of colonial administration in the colony during this period.

The Failure to Produce Development and Reforms

Criticisms of the composition of the interim administration did not unsettle Whitehall, committed as it was to direct Crown rule and the use of non-representative political personalities in the administration of the colony. Whitehall was however concerned that the administration be seen to be advancing HMG's programme of economic development and social reforms in the colony. Economic development so long neglected had at last become a priority concern but in so doing it presented problems which Whitehall had not originally foreseen and now found extremely difficult to solve.

When in February 1954 Sir Alfred Savage announced his Development Plan envisaging the expenditure of \$66,000,000 the PPP scoffed at its pretensions.²⁵ The Plan undertook to spend as much as \$46,000,000 in the first two years.²⁶ This was \$11,000,000 more than the IBRD had earmarked for a similar period and 50 percent in excess of what the Bank had anticipated spending in its five

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ British Guiana Report...1954. p. 5 and pp. 9-18. The entire Plan is reproduced on pp. 9-18.

²⁶ British Guiana Report...1954. p. 5 and pp. 9-18.

year plan.²⁷ The party's dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that this plan, like the 1947 Plan, was premised on a "quasi-inducement approach" to economic development.²⁸ The approach was inevitable in colonies like Guiana where the colonial economy was dominated by private capital which exercised considerable influence in the constitutional assemblies of the colony.²⁹ This was their preferred pattern because the revenue base of the colony was very small due to the limited range of taxes levied and which in turn restricted public investments. In the circumstances various inducements were offered to attract foreign investments. The nationalists criticised this arrangement because very often the ordinary gains to the colony were frittered away either in concessions to private companies or by the exportation of company profits.³⁰

There were two very serious problems affecting the implementation of the programme. The first was a shortage of development finance and the second a critical shortage of technical and administrative personnel.³¹ Whitehall was optimistic that development finance could be located for the projects earmarked

²⁷ Ibid., 1953. p. 7.

²⁸ W.David, p. 345.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Clive Thomas, The Poor and the Powerless, (New York: 1988). pp. 60-73 and Denis Benn, The Growth and Development of Political Ideas in the Caribbean; 1774-1983, (Mona: 1987). 84-106.

³¹ CO. 1031/38, Secretary of State to Savage, No. 404, 30 October 1953 and CO. 1031/1687, Renison to Secretary of State, (Personal for Rogers) No. 316, 3 July 1956.

for the colony but there was very little she could do about staff recruitment. There was only a limited number of officers available in the empire and with colonial development being promoted everywhere there was not enough personnel to service all the projects. What was more those available tended to gravitate to the more economically advanced colonies where salaries were normally more attractive. This however was not a problem that was peculiarly Guianese.³²

Savage had been very concerned about both shortages and the manner in which they were likely to affect HMG's commitment to economic development and social reform in the colony.³³ Since the war it had been the experience of both the previous Governors in British Guiana that Whitehall's promises seldom matched Whitehall's performances.³⁴ As if to justify the Governor's apprehension, in December 1953, just two months after the White paper's promise of development, he experienced his first disappointment when Whitehall rejected an application for development funding.³⁵ Savage then travelled to London to discuss an application for \$46,000,000 to fund the two year

³² For a balance discussion of this issue as it affected colonial development through the Empire, see, D.J. Morgan, The Official History of Colonial Development: A Reassessment of British Aid Policy, 1951-1965, (London: 1980). Vol. V. 236-270.

³³ CO. 1031/38, Secretary of State to Savage, No. 404, 30 October 1953.

³⁴ CO. 537/2245, "The Future of British Guiana: A personal View" Enclosed, Lethem to Secretary of State, 27 June 1949.

³⁵ Ibid., Secretary of State to Savage, No. 229, 24 December 1953.

development plan approved by Whitehall.³⁶ He had requested an initial commitment to an advanced line of credit for \$36,000,000 pending a decision on the method by which funding would be provided. Savage argued that Guiana's development plan would lose its priority once the Emergency had slipped the attention of the international press and HMG's opposition in parliament. Even before this happened however he did not expect funding to be provided easily so he was prepared to have Whitehall dictate what portion of the total was to be treated as a grant and which, a loan. But Whitehall refused to offer a line of credit to the Governor, promising instead to provide assistance in raising loans on the London Money market and new CD&W funding at a later date.³⁷

Savage experienced other disappointments as well. Immediately after the intervention he had submitted a list of expatriate staff required for initiating the development programme.³⁸ He stressed the urgency with which technical and administrative personnel were needed and the extent to which the success of the plan depended on the recruitment. He never received the staff requested.³⁹ Then in July 1954, a few months after the discussions on funding for the development programme, two of the

³⁶ CO. 1031/1329, Mayle to Rogers, 2 February 1954.

³⁷ HCD, 523, 8 February 1954. 827-832

³⁸ CO. 1031/829, Secretary of State to Savage, No. 163, 28 October 1953.

³⁹ Ibid. Internal memoranda by Mayle and H.T.Bourdillon, 8 December 1953 and Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting, 10 December 1953. Present were, Rogers, Mayle and Bourdillon.

most senior officers tasked with arranging development finance for Guiana engaged in a discussion which effectively reduced the urgency of economic development in the colony. Mayle argued that there was an unproven theory that the absence of economic development and social reforms were responsible for nationalist protests in colonies like Guiana.⁴⁰ He found that there was no evidence to support the thesis and warned against pursuing policies like those preferred by the USA in which development was unrelated to the ability of the colony to fund the upkeep of the projects once the USA had withdrawn. Rogers reasoned that the dependence so created made it almost impossible for the colony to ever achieve real independence.⁴¹ They agreed and the urgency first attached to a development programme for Guiana was dealt a very serious blow. In actual fact there was but one reasonable explanation of the contradiction between the public statements made by the Secretary of State and the hopes of the Governor Savage on the one hand and the official view in Whitehall: it lay in the fact that limited Imperial resources were constantly outstripped by competing colonial demands. It was not that HMG did not recognise the urgent need for economic development or the political import of pushing development in British Guiana given all the circumstances, but the stark reality was that HMG could not release sufficient resources to produce

⁴⁰ CO. 1031/1355, N L MAYLE, Head, West Indian Department to P Rogers, Asst. Under-Secretary of State, 1 July 1954 and Rogers to Mayle, 2 July 1954

⁴¹ Ibid.

the development she knew was urgently required in the colony.⁴²

Initially Whitehall also wanted to reform the conditions governing the Landlord-Tenancy relationship. As we have seen the PPP had attempted to effect similar reforms and had incurred the wrath of the land-holding class. Rogers once described the land relationship as most unsatisfactory but anticipated vigorous opposition from powerful landlords, "the old gang", long accustomed to having their own way and of receiving official protection.⁴³ Since this class was represented in the Executive Council, the opposition to reforms was expected to be vigorous necessitating unwavering commitment and resolute action from the Governor to deflect the opposition from the interim administration.⁴⁴ But the interests which had moved Whitehall to suspend the constitution could not be dealt with in an arbitrary manner and in the end the landlord was left secure in his privileges.

There were other areas of similar sensitivity. Both the police and civil establishments were to be reorganised to avoid the discontent which made the PPP so attractive to the junior officer ranks. Housing, for so long neglected, was in an appalling state and demanded an aggressive housing construction programme both

⁴² Morgan suggests that this was more common than often admitted, D.J. Morgan, A Reassessment of British Aid Policy, 1951-1965, pp. 186-210.

⁴³ CO. 1031/1432, Note on Colonial Policy for British Guiana by Rogers, 15 July 1955.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

in the rural and urban areas. But the efforts to have Sugar accelerate its programme for housing its workers failed as did the administration's attempts to locate funding for an urban housing programme.⁴⁵ Training for the assumption of public office was another of the key areas requiring urgent attention. Reforms of the Local government system on which this training programme depended therefore became a priority area both as a means of improving local administration and as training for a career in politics.⁴⁶ But since these reforms included the introduction of adult suffrage there was a fear that the PPP would obtain control of the reformed councils. Local government reforms therefore conflicted with the Emergency which sought the exclusion of the PPP from power.⁴⁷ At the same time graft and corruption had become a serious problem since the Interim administration had taken office thus increasing the need for trained public officials.

The failure of the proposed development and reforms packet was significant but it did not have the same effect as embarrassments experienced at other levels. There was a major run on the Post Office Savings Bank soon after the Interim government assumed office suggesting that the depositors did not trust the Interim

⁴⁵ "Housing Development" British Guiana Report, 1954-1957.

⁴⁶ CO. 1031/1432, Note on Colonial Policy for British Guiana by Rogers, 15 July 1955.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Government to administer their savings.⁴⁸ The colonial administration complained that the PPP had created the impression that local savings would be used to pay for the upkeep of British troops in the colony and since the invasion lacked support among the people, they withdrew their deposits.⁴⁹ The colonial administration had described an earlier run as indicative of a lack of confidence in the PPP administration.⁵⁰ They were now reluctant to see the subsequent run as indicative of a similar lack of confidence.

The second issue was of far greater significance. When the rumour of a military intervention first surfaced in the colony, assurances were obtained that the colony would not be burdened with its cost.⁵¹ Three months later Her Majesty's Treasury ruled that since colonial governments were responsible for their own internal security, when that security failed to the extent that HMG's troops were required to intervene, HMG's War Office expected to recover the costs governing the movement and upkeep of such troops from the colony which requested intervention.⁵²

⁴⁸ CO. 1031/1183, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 120, 20 November 1953.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ CO. 1031/38, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 120, 15 October 1953. The figures released were of the order of,

DEPOSITS	WITHDRAWALS	NET WITHDRAWALS
988,987	2,688,709	1,699,722

In 1953 the Post Office Savings bank carried on its books deposit to the sum of 16,000,000 Guianese Dollars.

⁵¹ CO. 1031/1436, Rogers to Savage, 22 May 1954 and Savage to Rogers, 16 July 1954.

⁵² Ibid., B. Melville to A.E. Drake, (Her Majesty Treasury), 9 February 1954.

The bill for garrisoning British troops in Guiana to 31 March 1955 was put, in the first instance, at £400,000.⁵³

The Colonial Office countered that even if Guiana could, no colonial government would ever vote that sum for such a purpose.⁵⁴ It argued that British Guiana could not afford such a bill and doubted whether the Executive and Legislative Councils, though wholly nominated bodies, would support a bill of that nature.⁵⁵ But by the end of 1956 the Colonial Office had given up its attempt to make the Treasury pay and the colonial administration, under a new Governor was instructed to honour the bill with great despatch.⁵⁶

Long before this, however, the colonial administration had begun requesting a reduction in the size of the garrison.⁵⁷ Later they argued against the usefulness of the troops in the colony.⁵⁸ But by this time the PPP had become privy to the dialogue and wasted no time in reporting to the public that they had been made to pay

⁵³ Ibid; HMG estimated that the extra cost up to 31 December 1953 of moving the troops was about £100,000 and the cost of maintenance at about £2,000 a week. HCD, 523, 1 February 1954. col. 14

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., F.Kennedy to Renison, 4 October 1956.

⁵⁷ CO. 1031/1436, F.D.Jakeway to A Lennox Boyd, No. 767, 1 December 1954.

⁵⁸ CO. 1031/1437, Secretary of State to OAG, No. 25, 20 July 1955 and OAG to Secretary of State, No. 41, 5 September 1955.

for the troops.⁵⁹

To make matters worse, the interim administration never seriously attempted to gain the respect of the electorate. They reversed the liberal legislations of the PPP and reintroduced the ban on Caribbean nationalists.⁶⁰ Communists literature was once again outlawed while the Trade Union Council was placed under the control of the British trade union movement. Thereafter British and American trade unionists determined the credibility of the working people's representatives.⁶¹

They also distanced the entire labour movement in the colony from the Caribbean Labour Congress and the World Federation of Trade Union both of which had been deemed communist. Utilising a special vote of £3,000 the British TUC provided the services of Messrs Woodcock and Dalgleish in what one parliamentarian described as "the best thing that has happened in British Guiana for a very long time".⁶² The statement, ironic in a way, was indicative of the insensitivity of British colonial policy in the colony since the invasion.

But the credibility of the local administration suffered an even

⁵⁹ The Thunder, 31 December 1955.

⁶⁰ CO. 1031/961, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 205, 17 November 1953 and No. 206, 18 November 1953.

⁶¹ The Thunder, 27 December 1954.

⁶² HCD., 524, 1955-56. Col., 1211. J.K.Vaughan-Morgan, 21 June 1955.

greater setback when the nominated members of the Interim Administration undertook to raise their salaries.⁶³ The Governor and the Colonial Office argued that Members had, in October 1953, agreed to serve at a stipulated salary and were shocked when they, not only voted to increase their salary by between forty and fifty six percent but chose to make the increase retroactive to 1 January 1954.⁶⁴ The report reaching the Colonial Office illustrated the extent of the increases.⁶⁵ Nominated members in the, Executive Council with portfolio from \$7,200 to \$10,000...45 %; Executive Council without portfolio from 3,600 to 5,040... 40 % and Unofficial Members of the Legislature from 1,900 to 3,000..56 %.

One senior officer, in a fit of exasperation, complained that over the months since their nomination the Interim government had insulated itself from the shocks of public opinion and the increases in their salary so soon after taking office on acceptance of a proposed salary was a clear indication of that tendency.⁶⁶ They were alarmed that not only ^{had} the Members chosen to increase their salary but had made that increase retroactive. It was a gross abuse of office, they complained.⁶⁷ They argued

⁶³ CO. 1031/1491, Governor's Deputy to Secretary of State, No. 73, 4 July 1955.

⁶⁴ Ibid., and Secretary of State to OAG, No. 32, 14 September 1955.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Governor's Deputy to Secretary of State, No. 73, 4 July 1955.

⁶⁶ CO. 1031/1433, G.F.Sayers to Mayle, 5 October 1955.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

that the increases could not even be justified by a corresponding rise in the cost of living, a revelation which considerably increased Whitehall's embarrassment; officials could only lament the absence of a sense of service or of self-sacrifice on the part of the local legislators.⁶⁸ The Secretary of State now totally embarrassed, lamely wondered why he had not been consulted on the matter.⁶⁹

The press condemned the increases as immoral, while some sections of the conservative community castigated the move as disgraceful.⁷⁰ Anthony Tasker, a senior executive of Booker Brothers described the measure as suicidal.⁷¹ It was, in his opinion, appallingly bad public relations, by a group of non-representative persons, who seemed to have lost touch with the reality of the politics of the colony. In a private letter to the Minister of State, one Guianese, described the move as thoroughly disastrous and excessive for legislators who had neither constituencies nor extra-parliamentary duties. The correspondent disclosed that within business circle the move had only served to increase the contempt in which the interim administration was held locally.⁷²

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Secretary of State to OAG, No. 32, 14 September 1955.

⁷⁰ Ibid., The Daily Argosy, 24 June 1955.
Reuter dispatch carried the PPP's response, 8 July 1955.

⁷¹ Ibid., Tasker to Campbell, 30 June 1955.

⁷² Ibid., John Vaughan-Morgan to Rt. Hon. Henry Hopkinson, Minister of State, 8 August 1955.

The Daily Argosy, the journal of Sugar in the colony, condemned the measure and pointed to other weaknesses in the administration. It noted,

over-confidence, over advertising, scarcely justifiable trips abroad, touches of arrogance and reluctance to let the public into Members' confidence to name but a few.⁷³

The paper remarked on the high note of confidence, the spirit of urgency and self dedication which prevailed at the time the Interim Administration assumed office; wondered how, in the short while they had been in office, they could have lost it all and forget that they were the focus of public attention.

By mid-1955 Savage had become totally disillusioned and on 22 July withdrew with as much grace as the situation allowed. No one believed that ill-health was responsible for his resignation and credibility was accorded this disbelief when it was announced, soon after, that Savage was accepting another post.⁷⁴ Even before his resignation, it had been widely rumoured that economic interests, particularly Sugar, which the Governor had frequently criticised, had exerted pressure in Whitehall demanding his recall.⁷⁵ While Savage never endeared himself to the Guianese public, his departure nevertheless exposed the level of disagreement which characterised the relationship between him

⁷³ The Daily Argosy, 3 July 1955.

⁷⁴ CO. 1031/1433, Sayers to Mayle, 5 October 1955.

⁷⁵ The Daily Argosy, 3 July 1955 and The Thunder, 4 July 1955.

and his superiors in Whitehall.

Governor Patrick Muir Renison was appointed 29 September but took up his appointment on 25 October. Upon succeeding Savage he was immediately disappointed with progress in the colony.⁷⁶ He pointed out that land development schemes in progress during the tenure of PPP government had ground to a halt. The responsible officers had resigned and the replacements promised to his predecessor had not materialised.⁷⁷ Local government was at a complete standstill with nothing done about the reforms recommended by the British expert, Mr Marshall, which had been accepted by the Colonial Office.⁷⁸

Subsequently Lloyd insisted that land settlement, housing and land reform be treated as development priorities in Guiana. Rogers concurred noting, that because the economic development

⁷⁶ For information on both the resignation of Savage and the appointment of Renison, see, CO. 1031/2222, Dabny to Revell, 8 October 1955. For the Governor's expression of disappointment, see, CO. 1031/1355, Colonial Office discussion of the general policy to be applied in British Guiana, 19 September 1955. Those present were, Renison, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor and Radford.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ A.H.Marshall, Report on Local Government in British Guiana, 1955 (Georgetown: Government Printery, 1955) (The Marshall Report 1955) and British Guiana, Local Government Reorganisation on The Implementation of The Marshall Report (Georgetown: Government Printery, 1957). The Colonial Office did not get around to locating Marshall until late 1954 when he was appointed by the Secretary of State,

To enquire and report on all aspects of local government in both rural and urban areas of the Colony and to make such recommendations as may be practicable and desirable.

Marshall arrived in the colony on 15 February 1955 and left on 5 May. Even though the Colonial Office accepted his report no serious effort was made to implement the main aspects of the report.

programme had not succeeded it was impossible for HMG to consider constitutional advance since the failure would force the local electorate to vote as they had done in 1953.⁷⁹ At the beginning of the new year Lloyd in his report to the Secretary of State could identify no favourable development and was forced to reiterate similar gloomy predictions.⁸⁰

Renison was despondent enough to have complained that six months after he had asked for help to implement reforms in the conditions affecting housing, land development, local government and roads he had received none.⁸¹ Renison was an ambitious colonial administrator who believed himself equal to the challenge which Guiana presented and was therefore intolerant of the failure to provide development and reforms in the colony since October 1953. He bitingly complained that Whitehall's criticisms about administrations lack of enterprise and the slowness of progress rang hollow.

In other words, nothing visible has happened for nearly a year in a project which you thought so urgent and important that you instructed that it was to go ahead before even it had been considered by

⁷⁹ CO. 1031/1355, Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 7 October 1955. Present were, Lloyd, Rogers, Radford, Renison and Mayle.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Lloyd to Secretary of State, 25 January 1956.

⁸¹ CO. 1031/1687, Renison to Secretary of State (Personal to Rogers), No. 316, 3 July 1956.

legislature. ⁸²

The Colonial Office shared the "disappointment and sense of discouragement about our complete failure" in Guiana, but then rationalised the situation by suggesting that they had pitched their hopes too high and needed more time if they were to be helpful.⁸³

By 1957, the development programme had been launched but still had not created the desired impact. There was a new five year Development Plan with \$91,000,000 for investment in various aspects of the economy. The 1957 Budget alone estimated capital investment of the order of \$41,000,000, while DEMBA was willing to invest some \$60,000,000 in development works.⁸⁴ Expatriate capital on the whole was very accommodating and invested lavishly in their respective enterprises. However since these investments neither provided new jobs nor created conditions for the expansion of employment opportunities they did not have the political impact Whitehall had anticipated.⁸⁵ Further, the most favoured treatment which expatriate capital was accorded in the colony continued to protect the enterprises from equitable taxation. As a consequence the colony's revenue base did not expand and the prospects of job creation continued to be negative.⁸⁶

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ British Guiana Report 1957. p. 2.

⁸⁵ Wilfred David, 352.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 345.

The initiatives of private capital might have been less conspicuous if other projects undertaken by the interim administration had received even modest attention.⁸⁷ But the ones most likely to be of good political report were deprived of capital or technical personnel or both. The most conspicuous failures were in the areas of drainage and irrigation, land settlement, agriculture, housing development, local government.⁸⁸ While the period produced a number of agriculture reports, investments in rice and crops, other than sugar, had not taken place. There were complaints of money to spend but no agreement on its disbursement.⁸⁹ Whitehall, the Governor and the ex-officios found it difficult to persuade the large landowners to accept a modicum of change and the land reforms were shelved. Slum clearance, urban and rural housing development proceeded at a very slow pace, the efforts of Sugar to rehouse its workers lacked coherence and adequate administrative support, and the Marshall Report had still not attracted serious consideration.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Report on British Guiana for the year 1957, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. "Review of Economic Progress"

⁸⁹ Jagan, The West On Trial, p. 179.

⁹⁰ In 1954 SPA had distributed 8, 573 loans totalling \$3, 365, 282. In 1957 these figures had grown to 14,484 loans totalling \$6,342,744. This latter figure included 3,054 second timers desirous of expansion and reconditioning and 3,719 interested in painting the recently completed cottage. The indications were that few loans had been issued to workers for house construction. But over the same period over a dozen new areas were prepared for house construction suggesting that the emphasis might have been on extra nuclear development at the expense of nuclear development. British Guiana Reports...1954-1957 . "Housing Development".

CO. 1031/1687, Renison to Secretary of State (Personal to P.Rogers), No. 316, 3 July 1956.

Criticisms of the Interim Administration

In view of negative reports and statements emanating from the colony right from the very beginning and because of serious misgivings within the Colonial Office, the Minister of State, Mr. Henry Hopkinson, was sent on a familiarisation visit to the colony in October 1954. He displayed a special interest in the functioning of the interim administration organs and the reception they were accorded locally.⁹¹ He too received complaints of the reinstatement of the discreditable "old brigade".⁹² From deliberations he had with them he concluded that there was little hope of them establishing any rapport with PPP constituencies. Mr. Hopkinson was also perturbed that the process of training in, and preparation for, public life was being wasted on the incumbents as few had a political future beyond the interim administration. He therefore suggested that the nominated Members be encouraged to cultivate constituencies, a process which if successful, would enhance their performance at electoral politics. He also suggested that since, as constituted, the interim administration could not be used as a training ground for participation in representative institutions that the local government system which had fallen into disuse should be rehabilitated.⁹³

⁹¹ CO. 1031/1355, Minutes of A Special Meeting between The Minister of State and Officials in the Executive Council, 5 November 1954.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ CO. 1031/1415, The Report of the Minister of State, Mr Henry Hopkinson, on his Visit to British Guiana, October 1954.

In his 1955 New Year's message, the Archbishop of the West Indies, declared that the situation in Guiana had worsened since the intervention of the British. He argued that fifteen months after the withdrawal of representative government, there was little to show, except the British troops and an over powering anger amongst the people. The colony was saddled with an administration, remarkable for bribery, corruption and nepotism which sapped the resolve of the honest and stifled the opportunities of the dedicated. He lamented that **"The mighty wave of discontent with existing conditions which swept the PPP into power remains as long as ever".**⁹⁴ The society remained a cauldron in which powerful combinations of wealth and influence oppressed the weak. He unhappily reported that **"The sense of empty frustration and agonizing bitterness has become accentuated".**⁹⁵

This was a biting criticism of colonial policy. It was all the more remarkable since it attacked the emergency programme which HMG undertook to provide in the wake of the suspension of the constitution. The Archbishop recognised that the administration was unsatisfactory but he also admitted that the policies were ineffective. He denounced the weaknesses of the society but he also recognised the social and economic disequilibrium which informed nationalist discontent and encouraged radical thought and action.

⁹⁴ The full speech was carried by Reuter's Telegram, 12 January 1955. For extracts, see The British Guiana Diocesan Magazine, January 1955.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

The New Commonwealth discovered a scapegoat at hand and hinted that the time had come for a new administrator. Savage had done his best but Guiana was going nowhere and getting there very fast. In the enlightened opinion of this journal Guiana needed an all powerful dictator, with authority unfettered by memories of past failures, to secure loyalty and cooperation and win over the Guianese people to the concept of Good Government.⁹⁶

The weaknesses of the Interim administration was also criticised in a discussion which George Woodcock, the British TUC officer assigned the task of reinvigorating the MPCA, had with an official of the Colonial Office. After a short stay in the colony in which he met most of the nominated members, Woodcock concluded that Cummings, the Member responsible for Labour, Health and Housing in the Executive Council and Rahaman Gajraj were self-seekers, lacking in any party spirit, policy and the capacity for organisation. Woodcock reported that Members were regarded as "stooges" and would never acquire political credibility. He predicted that they would soon be squabbling among themselves.⁹⁷

It did not occur, of course, to Mr Woodcock, that the sole purpose of his visit to the colony was to foster a non-representative organisation of the very calibre of persons whom he so disparaged in his report. It was instructive that Woodcock did not see that he, like Whitehall were engaged in the

⁹⁶ Ibid., New Commonwealth, 24 January 1955. 54.

⁹⁷ CO. 1031/1357, Note by Radford, 14 February 1955.

same exercise, exploiting the same calibre of persons.

It was ironic that while this quality of person was set adrift by the common people Whitehall employed agents like Woodcock and others, using the financial contributions of the British working people to restore the discredited to former positions of influence in *Ghana*

By this time the Public Relations Advisor, specifically employed to sanitize the invasion, was reporting "a perceptible sense of drift" within the colony; a malaise which affected all but the PPP, and was attributable to Whitehall's failure either "to capture the imagination" of the people or to capitalise on the sense of urgency manifest immediately after the invasion.⁹⁸ The Interim Administration, not chosen from a political party or from political parties was a divided organisation, lacking in coordination at all levels and beset by repeated incidents of a very unsavoury nature. Together these weaknesses had considerably reduced the esteem with which it had been held.

Colonial Secretary,
F.D.Jakeway, / noting that development was still elusive in the colony, argued that the Interim Administration was weak and ineffective.⁹⁹ He was intolerant of their incompetence and pleaded for the creation of a more centralised form of administration, preferring a situation in which the Governor ruled without the pretence of a nominated assembly.

⁹⁸ CO. 1031/1431, A.J.W.Hockenhull (Public Relations Advisor) to Radford, 28 July 1955.

⁹⁹ CO. 1031/1432, Jakeway to Rogers, 1 September 1955.

However as if insensitive to local opinion and the fears of Whitehall Savage demanded an extension of the system. Using the Robertson Commission Report he pressed for the extension of the Ministerial system but that the life of the interim administration be set at a lower limit of four years.¹⁰⁰ He wanted to expand the Membership of the Executive Council to include more elected persons. He argued that elected Members serving in a committed administration prosecuting an aggressive development programme would add local colour to the Executive Council, win support among the electorate and enhance the reception accorded the interim administration.

The fact was that the Secretary of State never cared for an Executive Council or the Membership system and therefore was not inclined to increase its membership.¹⁰¹ But there were definite opinions within Whitehall that the Membership system in Guiana was wholly unsatisfactory. For instance, Radford, a Principal in the Colonial Office, argued that an extension might have been perceived as a logical development had anyone been convinced that the original appointments were sound.¹⁰² Further, he was not persuaded that the Members had made an effort to acquit themselves in such a way as to convince anyone to the contrary. In examining the basis of their existence he argued that the possible advantages to the Membership system hinged on three broad notions. That it associated the unofficial element closely

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ CO. 1031/1357, Rogers to Savage, 14 December 1954.

¹⁰² Ibid., Radford to Secretary of State, 11 October 1954.

with the administration and therefore made the administration appear more liberal than it would ordinarily have seemed. Secondly that both the members and the Departments were gaining experience of value for the working of responsible ministerial system which would be restored in due course and thirdly that the Governor and the officials were relieved of some of the burden of administration which would otherwise have fallen on them. He was very doubtful of the overall impact of the system in relation to any of these notions.

He did not feel that much importance could be attached to the first and the value of the second was very doubtful as most of those holding portfolios were, in any case, without political future once democratic government was returned to the colony. In so far as the third was concerned, the value to be derived depended on the quality and outlook of the Members and he was not impressed with the calibre or commitment of the Members. In the circumstances he was certain that Whitehall would add to their problems by further extending or prolonging the Membership system in the colony.

But this was the substance of the earlier assessment in which the principals of Whitehall had argued that the nominated element, lacking in political credibility, could never win constituencies on the mere nomination for portfolios.¹⁰³ Further they had argued, the Interim Administration was not to be seen as a

¹⁰³ Ibid., Internal Memoranda, Mayle to T.Jeffries, 20 January 1954 and Jeffries to Secretary of State, 19 February 1954.

substitute for a representative Government. Whitehall did not intend it to be so construed and doubted very much that such a construction would have been accepted by the Guianese electorate.¹⁰⁴ It had nevertheless been conceded that an excellent performance by the Interim Government, could be used as political collateral to enhance their representative credentials.¹⁰⁵ But the underlying idea was for the colony to be administered by officials and an undercurrent of pessimism prevailed that the nominated element was likely to create more problems than it solved.¹⁰⁶

Subsequently and amid increasing scepticism among the officers Rogers, for instance, argued that there were two stages to the successful implementation of HMG's policy in the colony.¹⁰⁷ The first was to develop the resources, strengthen the economy and improve living conditions in the colony. The second was to prepare the colony for the eventual resumption of political advance towards self-government. He recognised that there were pressures which had become unavoidable over the years and so it was imperative that the approach to the development programme in the colony reflect the seriousness with which HMG's commitment had been given.¹⁰⁸ But it was difficult for HMG to ignore the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Secretary of State to Savage, No. 228, 23 December 1953 and No. 26, 24 February 1954.

¹⁰⁵ CO. 1031/406. Rogers to Savage, 16 November 1953.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ CO. 1031/1432, Note on Colonial Policy for British Guiana by Rogers, 15 July 1955.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

criticism that having removed the elected government, she had transferred the administration to a group of non-representative politicians, who by their demeanour and conduct inhibited the process of economic development and social reforms. HMG, he argued, had to be free to make serious decisions affecting the social and economic development of the colony.¹⁰⁹ The Members, he went on, had to become reconciled to the fact that in this process, they were to be the instrument and not the arbiter of policy; the executor not the maker of policy.¹¹⁰ Lloyd reporting on a visit to the colony and an assessment of the Interim Administration found very little to commend in the government.¹¹¹

The Movement for Constitutional Reforms

Disappointment with the performance of the interim administration, particularly its inability to effect economic development, and the ethical and political poverty of the membership aggravated the frustrations felt by Colonial Office staff over the obvious failure to restrict the militancy or reduce the influence of the PPP.¹¹² It was increasingly apparent that the Colonial Office was becoming reconciled to the fact that efforts to seduce the membership of the PPP, or for that matter,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ CO. 1031/1431, Summary Assessments of the Situation in British Guiana; Windsor, 23 June 1955 and Radford, 28 June 1955.

¹¹² Ibid., Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting, 19 September 1955. Present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison.

to crush the Party was more difficult than originally imagined.¹¹³

When the Emergency was proclaimed all political meetings, marches and demonstrations were outlawed; but while the overall effect was a reduction of the political life of the colony, because the PPP was effectively organised and structurally decentralised, it was able, as officials in London realised, to maintain its anti-colonial campaign.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless HMG was still unprepared to abandon its initial position that the return to democratic government was dependent on the evolution of an acceptable political culture in the colony. Whitehall wanted to be assured that the reintroduction of constitutionality would not result in another PPP government.¹¹⁵ Two years after the Emergency, however, HMG was still far from sure of that result and felt it was unlikely to be achieved in the immediate future.

At this point the problems with which Whitehall was confronted were the results of three distinct failures by the Interim Administration; its inability to win over the Guianese electorate, its failure to effect the promised colonial economic transformation and its lack of success in reducing the political influence of the PPP. It was, however, easier to identify these shortcomings than to formulate solutions for the problems they

¹¹³ CO. 1031/1355, The Report of the Minister of State on His Visit to British Guiana, October 1954, 5 October 1954.

¹¹⁴ CO. 1031/1431, Colonial Office Note by Radford, 28 June 1955.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

created. It was also clear that the period of marking time, because it had been so obviously unproductive, could not be prolonged much longer.¹¹⁶ This conclusion was the more serious because the state of emergency and the process of political repression had prevented the new parties from recruiting new membership.¹¹⁷ On the one hand the suspension of the electoral principle had caused the politically uncommitted to mentally distance themselves from electoral politics.¹¹⁸ It was difficult to stimulate serious debate about party politics outside the PPP constituencies and the new parties did not dare engage in such discussions within PPP constituencies. Frustrated by the impasse, the new parties accepted that only the PPP had a commanding platform while the emergency regulations were in force.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, while the political activity of the PPP was proscribed, it was unhelpful to permit others to organise politically, since this exposed them as politicians favoured by

¹¹⁶ This fact had been recognised as early as September 1955. CO. 1031/1432, Jakeway to Rogers, 1 September 1955. But nine months later, the Governor was forced to reiterate them for the information of the Colonial Office. Renison to Mayle, 22 June 1956. See also, CO. 1031/1355, Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 19 September 1955. Present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison.

¹¹⁷ CO. 1031/1541, Note by Vaughan-Morgan, 3 January 1955; OAG to Secretary of State, No. 319, 27 June 1955 and Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 7 October 1955. Present were, Lloyd, Mayle, Rogers, Radford and Renison.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 7 October 1955. Present were, Lloyd, Mayle, Rogers, Radford and Renison.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

the oppressor.¹²⁰

The politically ambitious needed to present themselves openly to the electorate before public recognition could be won, and this was virtually impossible once political assemblies were outlawed by the emergency regulations. Luckhoo and others therefore demanded a relaxation of the state of emergency to permit political organisation and public assemblies.¹²¹ Whitehall recognised the soundness of the case presented by the colonial politicians and discussed the issue.¹²²

Realising this, Renison presented Whitehall with a formula to cope with the political impasse in the colony. He suggested that the Emergency Regulations be varied so as to allow for party political activity by all while the communists remained restricted. Political meetings would be permitted but the leaders of the PPP, because of their restrictions would be kept from such activities.¹²³ The plan was well received in the Colonial Office but, in actual fact, it was not easy to

¹²⁰ OAG to Secretary of State, No. 319, 27 June 1955 and Reuters Despatch, 18 April 1956.

¹²¹ CO. 1031/1541, Reuter Dispatch, 18 April 1955; OAG to Secretary of State, No. 319 27 June 1955 and Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 19 September 1955. Present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison.

¹²² Ibid, Minutes of Meeting on Constitutional Development in British Guiana, 24-25, February 1956 and Minutes of Colonial Office Meeting with Renison, 19 March 1956. Present at both Meetings were, Rogers, Kennedy, Radford and Renison.

¹²³ Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on General Policy in British Guiana, 19 September 1955. Present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison.

implement. For one thing, as was suspected by most local politicians, it provided the PPP with further evidence of "political gerrymandering". This was a potent charge which once levied instantly discredited the opponents of the PPP. They were revealed as the recipients of political patronage. In point of fact, Forbes Burnham had earlier complained that the lifting of the detention order against him was a political liability.¹²⁴

This led to demands for a general relaxation of the system. In the House of Commons it was felt that the situation in Guiana must have improved considerably with the split in the PPP, the emergence of the Burnhamite faction and the organisational efforts of the NLF.¹²⁵ Was this not evidence of the strengthening of the moderate and responsible faction of the electoral spectrum at the expense of the extremists? In the circumstances would HMG not think it expedient to review its policy in Guiana?¹²⁶

The Secretary of State in his reply pointed out that HMG was not satisfied that representative government could be restored in Guiana without the risks of a further breakdown in the constitution. Referring to the split in the PPP, HMG considered it premature to assess the impact of this development on the true

¹²⁴ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 27, 28 April 1956.

¹²⁵ HCD, 542, 22 June 1955. col. 72.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 554, 20 June 1956. col. 100.

nature of representative politics in the colony.¹²⁷ It was apparent that Whitehall was still hesitant about the feasibility of constitutional restoration in Guiana and particularly, the pace of any considered restoration.

Governor Renison was impatient and wanted to redefine Whitehall's priorities in the colony.¹²⁸ He felt that the time had come for a new political offensive in Guiana. The bans on political meetings should be lifted to permit a better assessment of the people's response to the new parties. It was also time for the modification of the Interim constitution. He argued that even a limited advance, in which a partial return to constitutional normalcy, was preferred to the structure of the Interim administration.

Whitehall argued that a half way return to responsible government was difficult to arrange and highly undesirable in Guiana.¹²⁹ They were particularly concerned about the staging of an election which could possibly return the PPP to office with an extended majority. They feared that the administration could once again be confronted with a hostile group democratically elected to the legislature.

One month later the Colonial Office admitted that the Interim

¹²⁷ Ibid., 542, 30 November 1955. col. 211.

¹²⁸ CO. 1031/1355, Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on the General policy in British Guiana, 19 September 1955. Those present were, Rogers, Mayle, Windsor, Radford and Renison.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

government was a mistake which could not be tolerated much longer. It was, in the estimation of Lord Lloyd, inefficient and undoubtedly corrupt.¹³⁰ Yet the prospect of a return to democratic institutions in the colony alarmed some and worried most. In Lloyd's assessment, the PPP would win any election held under adult suffrage and the administration would be forced to decide on its relations with Janet Jagan and other radicals in the party. Whitehall considered removing Janet Jagan from the coastal zone but that was hardly likely to contribute to HMG's credit and would ultimately be exploited by the PPP. They concluded however, that a general relaxation of the Emergency Regulations to enable political forces to demonstrate their standing was unavoidable.¹³¹

Renison was particularly intrigued with the situation he found in the colony and wanted very much to resolve the impasse.¹³² He rejected the proposal to deport the leaders of the PPP to the inaccessible regions of the interior as a negative response to nationalist disaffection. He was convinced that the political impasse in the colony could be solved by the holding of an election. He reasoned that until such time as this was done the pressure would remain on the interim administration and on Whitehall but as soon as the election was held the pressure would shift to the Guianese politician who would then have to demonstrate his commitment to the development of his country.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 7 October 1955.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² CO. 1031/1355, Renison to Rogers, 5 January 1956.

Under these circumstances Whitehall would be better able to influence them to perform in a mature and responsible manner. He did however express the concern that Jagan might still be unacceptable to the Americans.¹³³

In the House of Commons the question was put to the Secretary of State whether he was now willing to concede the possibility of holding an election in Guiana? The response was cautious. HMG was committed to preparing Guiana for a return to democratic processes but doubted whether the time was right for the holding of an election. The Governor was assessing the situation and would report on the prospect of making further concessions.¹³⁴

The Introduction of Constitutional Reforms

In his specific recommendations for constitutional reforms, Renison suggested that a general election be held sometime around March or April 1957, that the Legislative Council be comprised of a Speaker, with a casting vote, elected from outside the Legislative Council, four officials, seven or eight nominated members, twelve elected representatives and a Deputy Speaker selected from within the House. He further recommended an Executive Council comprised of the Governor, four officials, one nominated member from the Legislative Council and five elected members from the Legislative Council. Finally he argued that universal adult suffrage and the twenty four seat constituency

¹³³ Ibid., Minute of a Colonial Office Meeting on Constitutional Development, 24-25 February 1956.

¹³⁴ HCD., 546, 30 November 1955. 211.

should be retained.¹³⁵

Renison insisted on an elected preponderance in the House because it reduced the possibility of deadlocks and other conflicts which tended to unsettle the economy and of which investors tended to be afraid. The Secretary of State seemed relieved to accept the proposals but countenanced prudence.¹³⁶ The modifications were to appear as a rudimentary alteration of the Interim constitution to make allowance for elected members and the Governor was advised to remind the colony that HMG still stood firmly by her intention to prevent the emergence of a communist state in Guiana.

In his broadcast to the colony the Governor reported that leaders of the PPP, responsible for the 1953 reversal, would remain disqualified for appointment to the Executive Council until HMG was satisfied that they had given up their communist objectives and were prepared to work for the good of the colony.¹³⁷

Political organisations in the colony were unimpressed with the proposals. The press reported that the proposals were dubbed "One Big Farce" by the PPP.¹³⁸ Dr Jagan condemned them as

¹³⁵ CO. 1031/1355, Renison to Rogers, 5 January 1956.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Secretary of State to Renison, No. 8, 23 January 1956.

¹³⁷ CO. 1031/1355, Text of Speech to the public announcing Constitutional Advance in the Colony of British Guiana on 21 April 1956.

¹³⁸ Reuter Despatch, 2 May 1956.

falling far short of what was required in the colony. In a quick response to the Governor's broadcast, the leader of the PPP claimed that the idea of a concession to the people of Guiana was a dishonest description of the forces motivating the proposals and he chided the Colonial Office for attempting an honourable exit from an administrative dilemma.¹³⁹

He identified two forces driving Whitehall to initiate constitutional advance at that time. First and foremost he pointed to the build up of internal pressure produced by the irredeemable failure of the interim government and the sustained demand from all sections of the Guianese community for its abolition. Secondly, he alluded to considerable external pressures, from anti-colonial forces and liberation movements, which harassed the British, forcing them to retreat from their former hardline positions. Dr. Jagan was unhappy with the constitutional proposals but most of all with what the Colonial Office chose to describe as their "flexibility". This he denounced as a camouflage to thwart public criticism of an arrangement in which twelve elected representatives were confronted by four officials and eight nominated members. Flexibility was intended to convey the impression that in spite of this blue-print the colonial Governor, in his discretion, was not bound to appoint all eight of the nominated members. The real position, as Jagan saw it, was a flexibility which gave the colonial Governor the right to act in accordance with his own perception of the results of the elections or prevailing

¹³⁹ The Thunder, 12 May 1956.

sentiments and loyalties of the Council. In the circumstances, if the PPP won a majority at the polls then the colonial Governor had the option of cancelling out the influence of this majority by appointing all eight nominated members. If on the other hand the moderates won a sufficient number of seats in the Assembly then the flexibility allowed the colonial Governor to appoint just the right number of nominated members to permit the moderates the preponderance in the House.

The proposed reforms were unpopular and no political organisation in the colony supported them.¹⁴⁰ This was a setback for Whitehall but particularly so for the Governor. Even the moderates sponsored by Whitehall confessed that while as individuals they were inclined to support the proposals, as politicians in the field they could not do so and face the electorate.¹⁴¹ The criticisms were discussed in the Colonial Office and it was agreed that the ratio between the nominated and the elected elements was not large enough to avoid constitutional deadlocks. It was therefore decided to increase the elected representatives from twelve to fourteen.¹⁴² This was a concession of considerable proportion but it did not satisfy a united front, "the All Party Conference" under the influence of the PPP.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Reuter Despatch, 2 May 1956.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 27, 28 April 1956 and No. 41, 11 July 1956.

¹⁴² Ibid., K.W.A.Scarlett to Kennedy, 30 August 1956.

¹⁴³ CO, 1031/1355, Press Release of 3 August 1956 which was carried in the dailies on, 4 August 1956 and The Thunder, 6 August 1956.

Whitehall had still not become fully reconciled to the return of the Jagans to nationalist politics in the colony. The matter was discussed once again and Renison pointed out that they could not be ignored for appointment to the Executive Council if the PPP emerged with the greatest influence even though they were unlikely to change their political beliefs or commitments.¹⁴⁴ Whitehall conceded the point but in the circumstances were concerned about Washington's attitude to the return of the Jagans and the PPP to power. It was agreed that all plans for a return to constitutional government in the colony were dependent on the reception they were accorded in Washington.¹⁴⁵

There was an underlying air of unreality about Whitehall's appreciation of the political realities in Guiana. For while they discussed the possible disqualification of Dr Jagan and the leadership of the PPP, Jagan was demonstrating his undisputed political leadership by organising an all party coalition in opposition to the constitutional reforms announced by the Governor.¹⁴⁶ All parties, sponsored or otherwise, were involved

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 358, 31 July 1956.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., Report of A Colonial Office Meeting with Renison, 19 March 1956. Present were, Renison, Rogers, Kennedy and Radford.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 41, 11 July 1956. In actual fact Dr Jagan does not claim credit for the idea. He attributed the idea of the all-party coalition to conservatives such as W.J.Raatgever, Sugrim Singh and Rev D.C.J.Bobb. This loose committee came together to protest against the prolongation of the Emergency Regulations which inhibited political activity in the colony. Jagan was a part of this movement and recognised its potential for acceptable protest and, thereafter became the directing force. Jagan, The West on Trial. 180.

in an exercise which demonstrated without doubt the locus of real political authority in the colony. When a delegation comprising Jagan, Dr J.B.Singh, Theo Lee, Burnham, L.C.Davis, Frank R.Allen, John Carter, Hugh Wharton and Richard Ishmael demanded a meeting with the Governor they were accused of allowing Jagan and the PPP to dictate their political conduct.¹⁴⁷ Renison complained that the parties were fearful of being outdone by the PPP and therefore became involved in the extremism and extravagance normally associated with the PPP.¹⁴⁸ This allegation was rejected by Luckhoo, who in a meeting recounted by Mayle, revealed his disappointment with the proposals. He confessed that while he was normally reluctant to criticise Whitehall's policy he was forced to do so because the constitutional proposals were limited.¹⁴⁹ Luckhoo did not associate his organisation with the All Party grouping but after consultation with Whitehall he publicly condemned the proposals.¹⁵⁰

In an effort to persuade Cabinet that it was time for the return to constitutional government in Guiana a Cabinet paper on constitutional development was presented to the Colonial Policy

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. See also, Press Statement released by The All-Party Deputation to see the colonial Governor, 3 August 1956. The NLF withdrew from the organisation when a neutral leader could not be found.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 27, 28 April 1956 and No. 358, 31 July 1956.

¹⁴⁹ Internal memorandum, Mayle to Rogers, 2 July 1956.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 41, 11 July 1956.

Committee which spoke of the significant changes in colony.¹⁵¹ These included the split in the PPP, the emergence of Burnham as a serious contender for the leadership of the party and the development of moderate parties with serious political potential capable of challenging the PPP.

The paper argued that the time was appropriate to experiment with a return to constitutional government in the colony since it secured the initiative for HMG in containing further political demands and in determining the measure and pace of subsequent reforms. To delay might force Whitehall, at some inconvenient moment, to make immoderate concessions in response to colonial pressure. Continuing, the paper observed that recent events in the colony indicated that the Jagans might be more inclined to cooperate with HMG than previously. This was a welcome development especially as the performance of the PPP at the election might warrant their appointment to the Executive Council. The paper concluded by arguing that constitutional advance in Guiana should be supported since it was a very important first step providing the opportunity for continued stability, the acquisition of political and administrative experience in the art of self government and further and accelerated reforms in the future.

But the Colonial Office was still uncertain as to the degree of political stability in the colony and considered the risks too great for HMG to be as liberal as the protesters preferred.

¹⁵¹ CO. 1031/1355, The Draft Memorandum on British Guiana Constitution prepared for presentation to The Colonial Policy Committee, 6 April 1956.

Officers argued that the concessions were in the nature of an experiment, justification for which was still to be assured.¹⁵² It was imperative to placate the fears of the conservatives and their allies, in and out of the colony. What was more HMG was very mindful of the need to keep faith with the Americans, whose fears of the PPP, its communist liaisons and potential, were still the cause of grave concern in Washington.¹⁵³

Colonial Office thinkers were also confident that the PPP, so long in the political wilderness, would not boycott the election.¹⁵⁴ They were therefore prepared to absorb local criticisms without conceding too many liberal amendments to the Renison constitution. Given the nature of the much criticised constitutional arrangement, it was reasoned that, if victorious at the polls, the PPP would seek an alliance with the Burnhamites or the UDP in order to secure an absolute majority in the house. They did not think that the party would contemplate an accommodation with the NLF.¹⁵⁵

Whitehall also contemplated the likelihood of the Party refusing office until given the opportunity to select the nominated members so as to ensure an absolute majority in the Legislative

¹⁵² CO. 1031/1355, Secretary of State to Renison, No. 8, 23 January 1956.

¹⁵³ Ibid., Renison to Rogers, 5 January 1956.

¹⁵⁴ CO. 1031/2842, Scarlett to Secretary of State, 22 March 1957.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Council.¹⁵⁶ Scarlett, for instance, reflected on the problems which confronted Dr Jagan. In the first place the PPP were interested in full Independence and in the circumstances the Renison reforms were never intended to satisfy their demands. But at the same, it was unreasonable to expect politicians like Jagan to accept office without the power to effect important changes. To do so exposed them to criticisms for not achieving development, when in fact, they lacked the essential power to do so. Jagan would therefore not find it easy to work along with Whitehall if the constitution was so limited that it denied him the opportunity to effect some reforms in the colony.¹⁵⁷ But the options in Guiana were very stark and after only 133 days of representative politics, neither section of the PPP could afford to be sidelined any further. Whitehall therefore gambled that they would choose participation and struggle.

Election date was fixed for 12 August 1957 and the necessary variations in the Emergency Regulations were made to accommodate an election campaign.¹⁵⁸

The Return to Party Political Mobilization

With the announcement of the date of election the political atmosphere in the colony was electrified and the Governor

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ CO. 1031/2246, Colonial Office, Paper on "Political and Constitutional History of British Guiana". (nd.).

reported on the quickening of political activity.¹⁵⁹ He was filled with optimism about the political future of the colony particularly since he was also able to report another split in the PPP and movements towards a coalition of the parties among the moderates. He hoped that HMG's continued determination to oppose the communists would not only encourage the opposition to unite to challenge the PPP but would persuade the electorate to support the new parties.¹⁶⁰ The actual date of elections though agreed upon was withheld from the public so that, if necessary, it could be varied to coincide with the most advantageous moment for the moderates.¹⁶¹ The Governor was instructed to facilitate the effectiveness of the moderates.¹⁶²

Jagan was later to claim that the 1955 split in the PPP had encouraged hopes within the Colonial Office that Dr J.P.Lachhmansingh and Jai Narine Singh who left the PPP along with Burnham would attract a substantial section of the East Indian membership of the PPP.¹⁶³ But in the end the officers admitted that the PPP was still the most influential political

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 358, 31 July 1956.

¹⁶⁰ CO. 1031/1355, Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on British Guiana Constitution, 19 March 1956. Those present were, Rogers, Kennedy, Radford and Renison.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² CO. 1031/1355, Memorandum on British Guiana Constitution for Presentation to Colonial Political Committee Meeting. 6 April 1956.

¹⁶³ Jagan, The West On Trial, 174-175.

organisation in the colony.¹⁶⁴

The formation of another PPP with a strong urban base was to a certain extent not what Whitehall would have preferred even though they welcomed the split. The UDP, with its strong conservative and racist LCP base, was already regarded as the party to challenge the PPP in the urban constituencies.¹⁶⁵ In this sense ^{therefore} _L another party with a strong urban base only fragmented _{party's} the anti-PPP votes and undermined the chances of the _L defeat. The Burnhamites did however possess the distinct advantage of popular support in the city which the UDP was still in the process of developing.¹⁶⁶

What Whitehall wanted more than anything else therefore was a party offering a strong rural challenge to the PPP. With the UDP set to relieve the PPP of its urban predominance, the expectation was for the NLF to perform a similar function in the rural constituencies.¹⁶⁷ When Campbell's strategy seemed destined

¹⁶⁴ CO. 1031/1355, A Draft Memorandum prepared for the Colonial Policy Committee of the Cabinet-British Guiana Constitution, 6 April 1956. See also Minutes of a Colonial Office Meeting on Constitutional Development for British Guiana, 24-25 February 1956. Present were, Rogers, J.C.McPetrie, Assistant Legal Advisor, C.Wylie, Attorney General, British Guiana, Radford and Renison.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., Memorandum prepared for presentation to the Colonial Policy Committee of the Cabinet-British Guiana, 6 April 1956. (Amended 14 April 1956).

¹⁶⁶ Jagan, The West On Trial, 176-177. See also, CO. 1031/1542, United Democratic Party. By the middle of 1955 the Colonial Office was beginning to have serious doubts about the Carter's leadership qualities and the prospects of the Party.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. See also, CO. 1031/1542, The National Labour Front. Note prepared by Radford on the NLF, 7 June 1956.

for failure, efforts were made to effect a coalition of the three, NLF, UDP and the Burnham faction of the PPP. Burnham's rejected the idea, reasoning that both parties could win but a single seat in the city and he was quite capable of taking that seat himself.¹⁶⁸ Further, Luckhoo was a political liability with whom he did not savour a relationship. Burnham realised a relationship with Luckhoo would lose him credibility with the electorate.¹⁶⁹ Faced with this rebuff the Governor scaled down its plans to effect a coalition of the parties. He was satisfied, however regretfully, to have them opposing the PPP severally.¹⁷⁰

Subsequent attempts by Kwame Nkrumah to reestablish amicable relations between the two leaders while they were his guests at the Ghanaian independence celebrations created considerable unease among the officer class.¹⁷¹ But Caribbean leaders, including Manley and Adams, attending the celebrations identified Burnham as their choice to lead the nationalist movement in the colony. The proposal won the approval of the Governor and the principals in Whitehall.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ CO. 1031/2482, Minute of a Meeting between A.Kershaw and Mr Burnham, in Kershaw to Profumo, 15 March 1957.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ CO. 1031/1719, Renison to Rogers, 4 June 1956.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., W.J.Wallace to Sir Edward Beetham, 26 March 1957 and Scarlett to Renison, 27 March 1957; The Accra Daily Graphic, 15 May 1957, carried an article on Nkrumah's initiative.

¹⁷² CO. 1031/2482, Scarlett to Rogers, 12 February 1957.

In 1953 the Colonial Office undertook to sponsor local political parties and had promised to provide the assistance enabling them to make significant inroads into the constituencies of the PPP. As a consequence of their sponsorship and support there were a number of persons desirous of forming political parties.¹⁷³ Among the several parties formed during this period were the **New Independent Party**, formed by Robert Adams, the **Guiana National Party** by H.C. Hugh, the **Guiana Rightist Party** by Gool Sheer Rahaman, the **Independent Party** by P.A.Cummings, the **Anti-Federation Party** by Daniel Debidin, the **Federated Democratic Party** by Sugrim Singh and Rev. D.C, Bobb and the **Guiana National Party** by F.R. Alleyne.

Potential leaders were selected and trained in the UK while the political material including anti-communist literature for the parties to use in its mobilisation, organisation and training programmes throughout the colony were provided.¹⁷⁴ But before long it was realised that the political environment was not conducive to the formation and growth of conservative political parties in the colony.

Whitehall would have preferred to have concentrated on the UDP.

¹⁷³ Among the leaders who attempted to fulfil this promise to the Colonial Office were, Lionel Luckhoo, The National Labour Front; Charles Carter and Percival A.Cummings, The British Guiana Labour Party; John Carter, The United Democratic Party; John Fernandes, The Liberal Party; and F.R.Allen, The Guiana National Party.

¹⁷⁴ CO. 1031/1183, Minutes of Colonial Office Meeting with Opposition Politicians from British Guiana. (n.d). See also, W.H.Mc Lean to J.B.Johnson , 30 October 1953 and C.Y. Carstairs to Rogers, 2 November 1953 on the same subject.

But between June and August 1955, two Colonial Office assessments of the UDP were unfavourable.¹⁷⁵ Radford dismissed its chances against the PPP, claiming that it was ineffectively organised and that Carter's middle class background and leadership style would prove detrimental in any contest with the PPP. Whitehall was therefore forced to look elsewhere for a party to replace the PPP.

The most vociferous of those professing an interest in party politics was Lionel Luckhoo who in 1956 formed the National Labour Front. Originally organised as a liberal foil to the reactionary UDP, the party was really the brainchild of Jock Campbell, the influential spokesman for sugar, who was afraid that the conservative UDP could not mount a serious challenge to the PPP and suggested a more progressive organisation. The NLF was therefore patterned after the British Labour Party with its welfare policies and programme.¹⁷⁶ They included national independence, the creation of a welfare state, land reforms and redistribution, full employment and industrialisation.¹⁷⁷

But irrespective of the support offered by the administration

¹⁷⁵ CO. 1031/1539, R.E.Radford reports on a Meeting with John Carter, Leader of the United Democratic Party, 5 August 1955. See also, CO. 1031/1431, A Note by Radford, 28 June 1955.

¹⁷⁶ Jagan, The West on Trial, 176-177.

¹⁷⁷ CO. 1031/1542, See Reuter Report on the National Labour Front formed by Luckhoo, 6 March 1956 and Renison to Secretary of State, No. 38, 29 May 1956.

none of the parties formed during this period demonstrated the capacity to become really serious contenders at the election and by nomination day 1957 several had disappeared.¹⁷⁸ Whitehall assessed the chances of each and in the end concluded that they would once again have to relate to an Executive Council in which the influence of the PPP was very strong.

Between October 1953 and 1957 HMG had embarked on a deliberate programme to undermine the influence of the PPP in British Guiana. In this pursuit she had employed the constitution, the military, and an undemocratic administration. Utilising Emergency regulations she attempted to dislocate the party's leadership and frighten its membership. In the end she admitted the failure of that programme. Whitehall was unhappy with the result especially as the PPP seemed to have emerged, in spite of two splits, as strong as it had been in 1953. What was more, the October invasion, the performance of the interim administration and Whitehall's own failure to produce reforms had provided the party with an altogether stronger nationalist platform. The 1957 election was therefore likely to be very important not least because the PPP was expected to be returned to office but also because it was returning to office under a constitution that was even more restricted than the one it had protested in 1953. Because Whitehall could devise no other alternative she was forced to accept the challenge which the return of the PPP

¹⁷⁸ Several leaders of political parties contested the election as members of another party. These included P.A.Cummings and Charles Carter and J.Fernandes while D.Debidin did not contest at all.

entailed. Significantly because of the absence of dialogue with the PPP Whitehall was uncertain of the attitude of the party's leadership to taking office under a limited constitution. Once again they were reduced to hoping that the burden of office would moderate the radicalism of the PPP.

CHAPTER SIX.

THE PPP GOVERNMENT AND THE RENISON CONSTITUTION, 1957-1960.

Introduction

Since October 1953 Whitehall had been engaged in an exercise aimed at reducing the influence of the PPP but after three years of authoritarian rule had concluded that it had failed to reduce either the influence or the militancy of the party. They therefore decided to return the colony to democratic rule under the Renison constitution with elections scheduled for August 1957. Though forced to accept the failure of its plans Whitehall was still pessimistic about PPP rule in Guiana and awaited the results of the election before determining the future policy for the colony.

This chapter focuses on the 1957 election, the return of the PPP to democratic government in the colony, the fear and distrust which informed HMG's policy in the post-election period, the continued resistance of the party to the imposed restrictions of the Renison constitution and its struggle to rid the colony of colonial rule, and Whitehall's eventual commitment to independence for British Guiana.

The Election of 1957

Even though the date for the election had been fixed for 12 August 1957 and the Emergency Regulations varied to accommodate an election campaign, the Emergency Regulations remained in force

and foreign soldiers continued to patrol the colony.¹ Now that the election was a certainty there were a number of complaints from various parties. The NLF, for instance, requested a postponement of the election to a date more favourable to its chances.² Whitehall had deliberately deferred the announcement of the date to permit opposition parties enough time to consolidate support among the electorate. The fact that they chose not to entertain the NLF's request was an indication of the rather low assessment they accorded the party's prospects of improving its chances.³

The PPP objected to the electoral boundaries of some of the constituencies.⁴ The party protested that Whitehall had reverted to the 1947 electoral boundaries which were acceptable under the 1947 system of restricted franchise but had become inappropriate with the introduction of universal adult suffrage. Failing to receive a satisfactory response the party further defined its

¹ MEC, 26 October 1956; 14 November 1956; MLC, 2 February 1957. An Order to Make Provision for the Election Of Members of the Legislative Council and for Purposes connected therewith; CO. 1031/2246, Colonial Office, Political and Constitutional History of British Guiana, (1957) n.d; CO. 1031/2249, Statutory Instruments, 1956. No. 2030, British Guiana, The British Guiana (Constitution) (Temporary Provisions) (Amendment) (Order-in-Council, 1956). HCD, 19 December 1956.

² CO. 1031/1356, Luckhoo to Campbell, 14 October 1957.

³ CO. 1031/1356, Irene Webster (Secretary to J.M.Campbell) to Rogers, 24 October 1956 and Rogers to Campbell, 12 December 1956.

⁴ MEC, 5 December 1956; The Thunder, 15 December 1956 and 17 January 1957; Spinner, 71 and Jagan, The West on Trial, 182-183.

objection.⁵ Drawing attention to the East Berbice constituency, a known PPP stronghold, the party pointed out that the authorities had combined three and a half of the 1953 constituencies to form a single constituency while in the Georgetown area, where the opponents were known to favour their chances five constituencies had only been reduced to three.⁶ The PPP argued that the overall effect of the changes were significant enough to alter the outcome of the election to the benefit of the opponents. When Whitehall failed to consider the issue seriously the PPP accused Whitehall of deliberately gerrymandering the electoral boundaries to secure the defeat of the party.⁷ It is very doubtful whether this was indeed the original intention, but once the possible consequence was brought to their attention, the colonial administration was quite happy to favour it.⁸

Five political parties, three of them new, contested the election.⁹ The PPP under Jagan and the UDP under John Carter had survived the 1953 elections. The newcomers were the PPP, under Burnham, referred to as the Burnhamite PPP, the NLF, still under Lionel Luckhoo and the GNP under F.R.Alleyne. The smaller

⁵ CO. 1031/2482, Report on a Meeting with Jagan, Scarlett to Moreton, 28 March 1957.

⁶ The Thunder, 12 March 1957; Jagan, 183 and CO. 1031/2482, Scarlett to Merton, 28 March 1957.

⁷ The Thunder, 12 March 1957.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ British Guiana, Report of the General Election; 1957 by the Chief Electoral Officer. (Georgetown: Government Printery, 1957). Appendix I, Table (I), A.

parties, despairing of their chances, had been subsumed by the larger parties.

The PPP (Jaganite) produced an impressive manifesto, and except for the fact that it was anti-communist and pro-federationist, the Burnhamite's manifesto showed little departure from the PPP's.¹⁰ The other parties concentrated on an anti-Communist attack on the PPP with the NLF varying from the UDP only in its opposition to the West Indian Federation. Both parties focused on the catastrophic consequences of a PPP victory rather than on any plan for the development of the colony in the event of their victory.¹¹

The PPP demanded a convincing mandate from the electorate arguing that the structure of the constitution made effective government impossible without an absolute majority.¹² It argued that too many parties returned to the legislature, all enjoying minority support, would allow HMG to install a weak regime not unlike the Interim Administration. It reminded the electorate that the issue to be decided was not whether the PPP was communist but

¹⁰ Spinner, 72 and Jagan, The West on Trial, 185. The nearest one gets to the real Burnhamite manifesto is their statement of intent in "Where Do We Go From Here" PPP Thunder, 16 April 1955 reproduced in Forbes Burnham, A Destiny to Mould, pp. 9-13; "What We Stand For" April 1957. Burnhamite election pamphlet.(NAG) and Election Broadcast L.F.S.Burnham, 9 August 1957 reproduced in PPP Thunder 11 August 1957.

¹¹ Both parties were given generous coverage in The Argosy and The Chronicle. See particularly the week 4-11 August 1957.

¹² "Introduction", PPP, People's Progressive Party Manifesto: Programmes and Policy. (Georgetown: 1957). p. 1.

whether British colonialism could be tolerated any longer in Guiana.

In its Manifesto the party reiterated several of its 1953 promises.¹³ It pledged reforms in the tenant landlord relationship, particularly the Rice Farmers Security of Tenure Act, compensation for land improvements, the redistribution of land to the landless, an expanded drainage and irrigation scheme under a single authority, better prices and cheap transportation for farmers' produce, the establishment of agri-based industries, the construction of more centralised rice factories and the modernisation of the private mills, the construction of all weather roads, giving top priority to interior development, rural health, a meaningful minimum wage, the repeal of anti-working class acts, the extension of the holiday with pay ordinance to cover all categories of workers, the implementation of the important but neglected aspects of the Venn Commission Report and the termination of industrial discrimination against women, the acceleration of the rural building programme, the investigation of local prefabrication, slum clearance, acquisition of more land for house building purposes, to extend the Rent Restriction Ordinance, to encourage the SPA to accelerate its nuclear programme, the reduction of the pensionable age, the abolition of the means test and increasing as well as equalising the rate of old age pensions for both rural and urban pensioners and to provide a social insurance scheme for all workers.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 1-7.

They also undertook to investigate the incidence of crime and juvenile delinquency in the colony, to reorganise the system of local government utilising the Marshall Report, to abolish the system of dual control in the education system, to increase the number of scholarships and school places, to expand the system of technical education and teacher training, to revise the school's curriculum, to launch a literacy campaign, increase library places and construct a national culture centre.

The party further promised to develop close links and greater trade with neighbouring Latin American states, to set up an Industrial Board, to encourage capital investments from all parts of the world, to nationalise the electric company owned by a British company, to restructure the system of taxation, to reform the Public Works Department and to democratise the RMB. Finally the Party regretted that the deficiencies of the West Indian Federal constitution made membership unattractive to them.

The election campaign was hectic but never achieved the enthusiasm which had characterised the 1953 campaign.¹⁴ The State of Emergency stifled the natural exuberance of the average Guianese elector. There was also a fear that an outward show of support for certain parties would attract the wrath of the authorities.¹⁵ But perhaps the greatest problem affecting the electorate was indecision. For one thing, until then very few

¹⁴ Burrowes, 93, refers to "an ambivalent electorate". Jagan, The West on Trial, 186.

¹⁵ Burrowes, 94.

believed that the split between Jagan and Burnham was anything but a ploy to confuse the British.¹⁶ They found it difficult to accept the truth. Many could not reconcile the flamboyance and unity of 1953 with the acrimony which characterised the 1957 campaign.¹⁷ The confusion was aggravated when Sydney King, an ardent supporter of Jagan, and the most vitriolic of Mr Burnham's critics contested a seat in a PPP stronghold and entertained Burnham as the main speaker at his meetings.¹⁸ Another critical factor was the increasing tendency on the part of the new parties to appeal to the ethnic vote. This was a particularly disturbing development for the rural voter whose best interests were served by racial unity.¹⁹ Finally whereas in 1953 the electorate found it much easier to identify and take a stand against their enemies, the British, foreign capital and the local allies of both, in the acrimonious debates of the 1957 campaign their leaders were being presented as their enemies.

Most parties were unsure of their standing with the electorate. There had been significant developments within the PPP where the two defections in 1955 and 1957 had resulted in the departure of

¹⁶ Jagan, The West on Trial, 186.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Spinner, 72.

¹⁹ In the rural areas where the social ties were stronger, relationships more interrelated and the population more evenly dispersed a greater degree of interdependency was inevitable and as a consequence harmonious race relations were a treasured commodity.

some of the most charismatic leaders of the party.²⁰ While most of them were still active in politics a few, such as Westmass and Carter, had retired for the time being. Yet, significant as these departures were, their overall impact was only to become apparent after the votes had been counted.

The Burnhamites were most uncertain of their chances in the rural areas where the PPP continued to be strong among East Indian and Black workers alike. They were however confident that they were the superior party in the city, in spite of the claims of the UDP and the NLF.²¹ As the election campaign progressed it had become manifest that the NLF did not have a large following in the city. This party was also beginning to question the reliability of its rural support as well.²² The UDP favoured its chances in the city and was confident that the four way split between the two PPPs, the NLF and itself had enhanced its potential.²³

²⁰ In many respects the second split when the ideologues left the party was the more critical. This radical element was still detained under the Emergency Regulations and felt inadequately represented in all the political manoeuvrings taking place in the party. In the 1956 Congress Speech Jagan had spoken out against the hard left and they felt that Jagan was in a way blaming them for the 1953 constitution crisis. They did not accept his analysis as valid and subsequently when Jagan decided to change his position on federation they were convinced that he was pandering to the racial fears of the East Indian community. Jagan denied the charge but the damage had been done.

²¹ CO. 1031/2482, Report on a Meeting with L.F.S. Burnham, Anthony Kershaw to Profumo, 9 April 1957 in which he claimed he would win about four or five rural seats and Ibid., Report of a Meeting with Kennedy and Farran, 12 April in which he claimed that he would win eight seats including the three in Georgetown.

²² Spinner, 72.

²³ Ibid.; Jagan, The West on Trial, 184-185.

There were 212,518 registered voters and fifty five candidates were nominated to contest the fourteen seats.²⁴ The NLF sponsored 14 candidates, the PPPs 13 each, the UDP 8, and the GNP, 1.²⁵ It was noticeable however that while the Burnhamites fielded only 13, it also supported the candidacy of Sydney King in the single constituency in which it did not field a candidate.²⁶

In spite of the earlier uncertainty and varying predictions the results produced no real surprises for the Guianese public or, for that matter, Whitehall.²⁷ The PPP won 9 rural constituencies. The only rural seat the party failed to capture was an interior constituency it did not contest which went to the NLF. The Burnhamites won the three Georgetown seats of which they had been confident while the UDP, with W.O.R.Kendall as its candidate, assured itself of its only seat in the New Amsterdam constituency.

²⁴ Report of the General Election 1957... Appendix I, Table (I), B.

²⁵ Ibid., Appendix I, Table (I) A.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ CO. 1032/155, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 305, 14 August 1957.

HOW THE PARTIES PERFORMED: THE 1957 ELECTION RESULTS.

PARTIES	CANDIDATES	BALLOTS	PERCENTAGE	SEATS
PPP (J)	13	55,552	47.50	9
PPP (B)	13	29,802	25.48	3
NLF	14	13,465	11.51	1
UDP	8	9,564	8.18	1
GNP	1	199	.17	-
IND'DENTS	6	8,357	7.1	-
TOTAL	55	116,969		14

Extracted from British Guiana, The Report of the Election...1957.

Appendix I, Table (I) A. Summary of Votes Cast and Percentages.

Twenty candidates, including all the independents, lost their deposits. Of the five women nominated only one, Janet Jagan, won her seat. Two members of the Interim administration, W.O.R.Kendall and Stephen Campbell, retained their constituencies. Four 1953 PPP legislators, Jessica Burnham, J.P. Lachhmansingh, Jane Phillips-Gay on the Burnhamite tickets and Sydney King, (who, while he entered as an Independent, came to be recognised as a Burnhamite) were defeated. Lionel Luckhoo was defeated in a Georgetown constituency while P.A. Cummings, (who served as Minister of Health and Housing in the Interim Administration, and under the sponsorship of the Colonial Office formed the British Guiana Labour Party which did not participate

in the election) was also defeated on a UDP ticket, losing his deposit.²⁸

In the fourteen constituencies, eight candidates won with a return of 50 percent or more. Of this number five were PPP candidates, two were Burnhamites and the other the NLF candidate. Two PPP candidates polled 49.7 percent while alone, Jagan polled more votes than all the successful opposition candidates taken together. The results revealed that between them, that is, the parties of Jagan and Burnham along with Sydney King accounted for more than eighty percent of the votes, thus demonstrating the extent to which the moderates had failed to create an impression with the electorate.²⁹ Further, if the Georgetown votes were discounted the PPP alone accounted for more than sixty percent of the valid votes.³⁰ Overall, only 118,564 or 55.8 percent of the registered voters cast their ballot, a much lower figure than the 74.8 percent of 1953. There were 1,625 spoilt votes.³¹ Because of the low turn out overall, the PPP with 48 percent of the valid votes claimed nine of the fourteen seats. ³²

²⁸ P.A.Cummings and Charles Carter, both co-founders of the British Guiana Labour Party contested as members of the UDP.

²⁹ CO. 1032/155, Renison to Rogers, 14 August 1957.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ British Guiana, The Report of the General Election ...1957, Appendix I, Table (II)

³² CO. 1031/2625, Electoral Reforms in British Guiana. See especially, Renison to Scarlett, 27 October 1958 and Scarlett to Renison, 18 December 1958.

The low turn out at the 1957 election can be explained in a variety of ways. Jagan for instance identified the split in the leadership of the party, the bitterness of the campaign and the apprehension created by the continued presence of troops in the colony.³³ The Electoral Registrar blamed the timing of the registration which took place before the parties had committed themselves to participate, the timing of the election, which occurred when the interior residents were normally on holiday in the city, and the heavy rainfall on polling day, for the low poll.³⁴

But generally there was both as much fear of as there was indifference to the registration process and these were attributable to the split and the confusion which it created as well as the continuation of the Emergency Regulations and the presence of troops.³⁵ Many were fearful that a PPP victory would prolong the Emergency Regulations and aggravate the activities of the troops while others feared that the ballot could be traced and a vote for the PPP would eventually lead to victimisation. There was also the distinct possibility that the much criticised performance of the Interim administration created a higher level of disaffection with colonial politics and politicians than has hitherto been admitted.³⁶

³³ Jagan, The West on Trial, 185-187.

³⁴ The Report of the General Election 1957. p. 12.

³⁵ Jagan, The West on Trial, 185-187 and Burrowes, 74.

³⁶ D.P. Vatux, The 1957 Election in British Guiana, (Georgetown: 1957). p. 4.

Reaction to the PPP Victory in the 1957 Election

In his assessment of the results, the colonial Governor lamented how the passage of time and progress in the colony had done little to reduce the influence of Jagan.³⁷ This was a further confirmation of the failure of the various undemocratic strategies adopted by Whitehall and implemented by the colonial administration. One British source subsequently announced that **despite all the manoeuvrings in the intervening period and the rigging of the constituency boundaries the PPP was victorious.**³⁸

The margin of victory posed some problems for the Governor and Whitehall, especially as Jagan was determined to form a government of his own choosing irrespective of whatever reservations Whitehall might have had of the Jagans. For some time previous to the election, Whitehall had caused it to be announced publicly and on repeated occasions that the PPP under the Jagans would not be tolerated in Government. More recently and in muted tones they had reluctantly accepted the fact that they had no choice but to work along with the elected government in the colony. This retreat had not been made public so that there was much speculation about the formation of the Government.³⁹ There is reason to believe that the speculation reached official circles as a report from the Governor would seem

³⁷ CO. 1032/155, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 27, 14 August 1957.

³⁸ CO. 1031/2250, Report of Speech made by Mr Fenner Brockway, Labour MP, Holborn Hall, 17 October 1957.

³⁹ Ibid.

to indicate. Renison confessed that there could be no alternative to the PPP.

All sections of the community here, including big business, are expecting Jagan to be given the opportunity of taking office with a working majority.⁴⁰

He noted that this opinion was also shared by Caribbean journalists whose articles reflected the regional expectation.⁴¹

When this new position was reported to the State Department in Washington, alarm was expressed at this new resurgence of communist influence on the American continent.⁴² HMG was not happy and re-invigorated the process of consultation with the State Department acknowledging the American **special interest** in the area and a UK commitment **as a matter of course**, to keep them informed.⁴³ The Ambassador was however advised that **there was no advantage in advertising the fact that we keep the US government informed.**⁴⁴ Both the tone of the notes and the discussions which ensued between the various desk officers suggest that HMG was unhappy with the US response to political developments in Guiana, blamed it on the quality of communication

⁴⁰ CO. 1031/155, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 27, 14 August 1957.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² FO. 371/126078, Foreign Office Note, (n.d).

⁴³ Ibid.; R.W.Jackling, UK, Washington, to H.A.A. Hankey, 10 October 1957.

⁴⁴ Ibid., A Rumbold to I. Harvey, 24 October 1957 and Kennedy to Hankey, 23 October 1957.

between the missions, and undertook to improve that quality thereafter. What was most significant was the tacit admission on the part of HMG that the US had to be consulted on policies pursued in Guiana. Coming as it did after the election it posed further problems for Whitehall since Caribbean public opinion expected the democratically elected government of the PPP to take office in the colony. What was more the PPP was not making the process easy for HMG.

Because the Party's nine elected representatives formed a minority in the twenty-four member legislature the Governor wondered whether the PPP would enter into an alliance with any of the other parties to be assured of an absolute majority in the legislative assembly. There was further speculation to this effect when it was learnt that Jagan was still interested in a United Front government with the Burnhamites.⁴⁵ The PPP had not given up the search for common ground with Burnham, but considering the nature of the Renison Constitution it was politically advantageous for the Burnhamites to be aligned against the administration and Burnham was astute enough to have recognised this.⁴⁶ He was therefore not reluctant to frustrate the efforts of the PPP declaring that the Burnhamites would walk alone.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ CO. 1031/2482, Jagan's RIIA Meeting, 20 March; Meeting with Scarlett, 22 March 1957; Jagan before the Commonwealth Affairs Committee, 3 April 1957; United Commissioner to Ghana to CRO, No. 97, 11 April 1957; PPP Thunder, (Burnhamite). 15 June 1957; Janet Jagan to L.F.S. Burnham, 20 August 1957. (PPP Archives, Freedom House, Guyana); PPP Thunder, 8 September, 1957.

⁴⁷ PPP Thunder, 8 September 1957 and Jagan, The West on Trial, 185.

Dr Jagan subsequently admitted, with considerable bitterness, that in order to survive over the period 1957-1961 the Party virtually entered into a coalition with the Colonial Office.⁴⁸ It was this vulnerable option which rendered the constitutional reforms weak and unpopular. It was a situation which the PPP were unprepared to tolerate for long. But they did not do so willingly nor immediately. Jagan first demanded the right to influence the manner in which nominated members were appointed in the new government. In its Election Manifesto the party had alluded to a comparable situation in Trinidad where the Governor had entered into an arrangement with Dr Williams to resolve a similarly contentious issue. On that occasion, it was noted that the Secretary of State had ruled that the principle of nominating members must not be utilised to frustrate the will of the people.⁴⁹ This principle had informed the manner in which HMG had resolved similar situations not only in Trinidad but also in Malaya and Mauritius and Jagan was optimistic that Guiana would not be treated as an exception.⁵⁰ When invited to meet the Governor, Dr Jagan therefore demanded that he be consulted on the appointment of the nominated members declaring that his party would not accept office without the assurance of a majority vote in the Legislative Assembly and the Executive Council.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Jagan, The West on Trial, 188.

⁴⁹ "Introduction" PPP Election Manifesto 1957. p. 1.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ CO. 1032/155, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 28, 16 August 1957.

Renison was reluctant to accede to this request but Jagan insisted that nothing short of a concession would encourage the PPP to form the government.⁵² It was obvious that the election results had severely reversed Whitehall's advantage in handling the Guiana situation and Jagan seemed aware of this reversal. Over the last four years Whitehall had been preoccupied with keeping the PPP out of Office, but with the electoral victory local and regional opinion and expectations, the requirements of democratic principles and precedents, mounting pressure and administrative embarrassment forced HMG to make concessions to get the PPP into office.

The Governor subsequently assured Dr Jagan of consultation on the selection of some of the nominated members and of a majority in the Executive Council.⁵³ Jagan then submitted the names of Henry Joycelyn Makepeace Hubbard and Rev. C.C. Belgrade for appointment as nominated members to the Legislative Council. Again Jagan insisted that unless there was a positive response his party would refuse to form the government.⁵⁴ As the Governor considered this the "ultimate grease which would make the mill turn" he accepted the choice of the party.⁵⁵ Armed with these assurances Jagan agreed to form the government. But buoyed by his successes, Jagan made one last demand. He submitted the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., No. 30, Pt. 1, 21 August 1957.

⁵⁴ Ibid., No. 30, Pt. II, 21 August 1957.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

names of Bowman and Hubbard for appointments as Parliamentary Secretaries and once again the Governor assented.⁵⁶

However, the agreements between Jagan and Renison were premature.

Renison should have obtained prior permission from the Secretary of State in consultation with the Prime Minister, before acceding to any of Jagan's demands.⁵⁷ Whitehall, and particularly, HMG wanted assurances that the persons identified by the PPP were acceptable persons for the respective appointments; in the case of permanent secretaries, where there was a distinct possibility of subsequent requests for appointment to the Executive Council, HMG was inclined to be particularly wary.⁵⁸

Fred Bowman, a small cafe proprietor had been elected to the 1953 Assembly. He was a devoted follower of Jagan, professed strong Marxist beliefs and had been jailed for a breach of the Emergency Regulations in 1954. But even so his appointment was not a serious problem because once again he had secured election to the Legislative Council.⁵⁹ Joycelyn Hubbard, on the other hand, was a renowned Marxist and a founder member of the PAC. He had not been a candidate in either the 1953 or 1957 elections; because he was unelected and a communist Whitehall was inclined to reject his nomination, on the ground that he was a communist whom HMG

⁵⁶ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 636, 11 September 1957.

⁵⁷ CO. 1031/2249, Rogers to Renison, 19 December 1957.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Renison to Rogers, 19 November 1957.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Rogers to Sir John MacPherson, 15 October 1957.

had not in the first place accepted as qualified for nomination to the Legislative Council.⁶⁰ This placed the Governor, who had given consent to the nominations, in a quandary.⁶¹ He explained his predicament. Although still inclined to disapprove, Whitehall decided to let the issue rest, noting that ^{after} the Governor's success in getting Jagan to form the government there could be little wisdom in introducing a discordant note at that stage.⁶²

Whitehall was fearful that while as a junior minister Hubbard would only serve in the Legislative Council, this might ^{nevertheless} lead to his subsequent appointment as a full minister and a seat in the Executive Council, which it found unacceptable. It was conceded however that once the initial appointment had been made it would thereafter be difficult to prevent Hubbard becoming a member of the Executive Council if Dr Jagan should press such a case.⁶³ For this reason it needs to be noted that while they decided to support the Governor's position, they did not approve the nominees for Parliamentary Secretaries who in fact were never appointed. The Governor and Dr Jagan nevertheless completed the appointment of members of the Legislative Council and the allocation of ministerial portfolios.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid., Scarlett to Rogers, 11 October 1957.

⁶¹ Ibid., Renison to Rogers, 19 November 1957.

⁶² Ibid., Scarlett to Rogers, 11 October 1957.

⁶³ Ibid., Rogers to MacPherson, 15 October 1957.

⁶⁴ MLC, 10 September 1957 and CO. 1031/2222, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 325, 28 October 1957.

The PPP Government and the Renison Constitution

By appointing only six of the eleven nominated members, chosen from substantial members of the community, the Governor had produced a keen balance in the Legislative Council.⁶⁵ The PPP with an elected membership of nine and one of the nominated members enjoyed an overall membership of ten in the Council. There were five opposition elected representatives from the opposition and five nominated members ensuring that with ten each, Jagan needed to secure the support of a section of the opposition, nominated or elected, to prevail in the Assembly.

There were three ex-officios but since as members of the Executive Council, they operated under the principle of collective responsibility, they were expected to vote with the government or abstain altogether. The PPP government was therefore not as vulnerable as even they were often inclined to make out. In the Executive Council the Governor also waived his right to appoint the full quota of nominated members. Only the PPP elected members were appointed and as a consequence the PPP enjoyed a majority of two, barring the Governor's votes, which if employed were capable of providing a deadlock.

But the even distribution in the legislature worried the PPP who despaired of their ability to implement important aspects of the party's policy, depending as it did on the Governor's pleasure,

⁶⁵ Jagan subsequently disclosed that four of the six, Messrs Fredericks, Hubbard, Tasker and Davies were nominated after consultation within. Jagan, The West on Trail, 189.

the support of the ex-officios and the cooperation of the nominated group. Most worrying of all however was the abiding threat that the Governor could, whenever he chose, appoint the remaining nominated members to the Councils and therefore ensure the defeat of the PPP.

In consulting with Dr Jagan on the appointment of the nominated element in the Legislative Council the Governor had attempted to reduce the margin of conflict, but he had not conceded to Dr Jagan the right to determine the selection of the nominated members. The Governor confessed that the only reason he made the concessions was because strong public opinion supported the appointment of a PPP Government.⁶⁶ He might have been "**over a barrel**" but he retained control over the negotiations conceding only where and when it was unavoidable.⁶⁷ This is borne out by the nomination of Tello, and Gajraj, both of whom the PPP would have rejected if given the choice.⁶⁸ Tello represented the forces, both local and external, which destroyed the trade union movement in Guiana immediately after the 1953 invasion and Gajraj had served on the Interim Administration. Subsequently Gajraj was identified as the ideal replacement for Jagan as leader of the East Indian section of the PPP in the Colonial Office's plan

⁶⁶ CO. 1032/155, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 27, 14 August 1957.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Governor to Secretary of State, No. 28, 16 August 1957; No. 30, Pt. I, 21 August 1957; No. 30, Pt. II, 21 August 1957 and No. 34, 27 August 1957; Jagan, The West on Trial, 188-189.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

to destroy the Party.⁶⁹ The Governor insisted on their appointment but permitted a greater degree of consultation on the others.

Jagan had also objected to the nomination of Mr Frank McDavid and successfully persuaded the Governor to defer the appointment.⁷⁰ Jagan did not oppose the Governor's intention to have the bauxite industry represented in the Executive Council, but once again the industry declined the invitation.⁷¹ Davis, on the other hand was acceptable to the PPP. He had led the All Party grouping which challenged the Governor's first reforms and subsequently resisted pressures to disband the organisation when it threatened Whitehall's efforts to destroy the PPP.⁷² Jagan also accepted Anthony Tasker, Sugar's representative and Martin Fredericks whom he thought was capable of maintaining an independent position. While still dissatisfied with the vulnerability of the government under the Renison constitution, Jagan subsequently confessed that given the nationalist perspective of some of the Governor's nominee he felt that he could win their support on those aspects of his policies which did not directly affect their class interests.

⁶⁹ CO. 1031/1173, Savage to Secretary of State, No. 156, 20 October 1953.

⁷⁰ CO. 1032/155, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 30, 21 August 1957.

⁷¹ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 33, 24 August 1957.

⁷² Jagan, The West on Trial, 189.

The party nevertheless decided to press for changes in the constitution at the first convenient moment and subsequently to demand complete self-government. The party reasoned that since Burnham had supported both positions during the election campaign while he would be unhappy supporting the PPP he would find it difficult to oppose either issue.

In spite of the occasional difference with his Ministers, the Governor expressed satisfaction with the performance of the government at the end of election year, 1957. He was however apprehensive about the administration's inability to proceed with economic development and the negative effect this would have on the colony in general and specifically on the behaviour of his Ministers. For the time being he noted that they were serious in their attempts to cope with the frustrations of colonial administration. Particularly, they had difficulties handling the criticisms of a parliamentary opposition, the delays caused by a non-political civil service, official procedures (red tape) and the concerns for minority rights. He was nevertheless impressed with their performance and felt that there was every reason to be optimistic about 1958, that was, " unless HMG refuses to back our credit and there is a financial crisis."⁷³

⁷³ Ibid., Renison to Rogers, 30 December 1957.

The Early Movement for Constitutional Reforms.

In March 1958 the government raised the question of further reforms in the constitution.⁷⁴ Jagan's timing was ^{impeccable} since the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies was expected in the colony within a few weeks, while a Guiana delegation was due to visit the United Kingdom to discuss economic development, in the summer; Jagan now announced that the Guiana agenda would extend beyond the realm of mere economic concerns.⁷⁵

At the Party Congress in April 1958, Jagan attacked the Renison Constitution which reduced the Executive Council to mere advisors of the Governor. Once again he criticised the Emergency powers retained by the Governor who could still ignore Ministerial recommendations. In deep frustration he declared that the Party did not feel like a Government. They were in office, he reported, but not in Power.⁷⁶ They decided to seek immediate reforms including the lifting of the state of emergency and the withdrawal of the additional powers which the Governor enjoyed as a consequence of the emergency, the removal of the Financial Secretary from the Executive Council and the appointment of a Minister of Finance, a redesignation of the Leader of the House to that of Chief Minister and his appointment as president of the Executive council replacing the Governor, the removal of the nominated section in the Legislative Council, ministerial

⁷⁴ CO. 1031/2246, The Times, 22 March 1958 and Renison to Secretary of State, No. 95, 31 March 1958.

⁷⁵ CO. 1031/2214, Reuter Dispatch, 17 April 1958.

⁷⁶ CO. 1031/2246, Reuter Dispatch, 1 April 1958 reported Jagan's Congress Speech; The Thunder, 14 April 1958.

authority to appoint the members of boards and committees and to be consulted when appointing permanent secretaries, heads and deputy heads of Departments, and a constitution no less advanced than the ones given to Trinidad and Jamaica.⁷⁷

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, J.D. Profumo, accompanied by his wife, the actress Valerie Hobson, visited the colony immediately after representing the United Kingdom Government at the opening of the West Indian Federation.⁷⁸ His official agenda included discussion with the Governor and the Executive Council on development finance, country wide electrification, including the possible nationalisation of the Electricity Company and constitutional reform.⁷⁹

In their meeting with the Under-Secretary they pressed the case for immediate constitutional reforms demanding immediate passage towards a constitution equal in status to those enjoyed by Trinidad and Jamaica.⁸⁰ Dr Jagan argued that his Party desired immediate internal self government. He recognised that other colonies had progressed to self government by degrees, but because of special historical circumstances he felt that Guiana should be permitted to by pass the gradual route to self

⁷⁷ CO. 1031/2255, Notes of Jagan's Flexible Reforms. (nd.).

⁷⁸ CO. 1031/2412, Reuter Dispatch, 17 April 1958.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 95, 31 March 1958.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Minutes of Meeting between Profumo and the Executive Council, 17/18 April 1958.

government. He argued that the colony satisfied all the requirements for self government. Guiana possessed the necessary political maturity, economic potential and administrative competence.

In his judgement, the time had come when the majority party in Guiana should be permitted to exercise control over the administration of the colony with the possible exception of defence and foreign relations, excluding foreign trade. The checks and balances, which HMG insisted on retaining should remain in the nominated element or in a second chamber. The party and Government were not opposed to Service Commissions geared to protect the impartiality of the services.

Referring particularly to the administration of the colony Governor Renison disagreed with Dr Jagan and expressed the opinion that in this particular, the colony was not ready for an all elected cabinet. But Jagan felt that the Governor was underestimating the native intelligence of the Guianese people and insisted that Guiana possessed a full complement of qualified and experienced civil servants who could be called upon to assist the Ministers in the administration of the colony.

The Chief Secretary supported Jagan on the quality of the Civil Service. He did not think that they were all that Dr Jagan made them out to be, but in his opinion, they were as good as could be found in any West Indian colony enjoying a constitution comparable to the one sought by the colony. But he reminded Dr

Jagan that with self government the overseas civil servants were permitted premature retirement with their compensation and this tended to reduce the quality of the service on which Ministers depended.

The Under-Secretary of State reported that HMG preferred that colonies should advance politically, economically and administratively at an even pace and the public administration, he argued, should have worked along with the politicians for a considerable period of familiarisation before self government was conceded.

Renison doubted whether it was feasible for a colony like Guiana to demand self government and declare itself sovereign when not reasonably self-supporting. He recognised that there was considerable pressure on the government to seek self government but, in his opinion, the timing was premature. He was therefore against an approach to the Secretary of State before the immediate financial future of the colony was assured.

Jagan countered that while it was reasonable to argue a case for economic security preceding political emancipation, in reality there were few countries which enjoyed that happy state and demanded that a colony, politically mature as Guiana was, should have a greater say in the conduct of its affairs. Profumo cautioned patience and commended the logic of economic security preceding political independence.

Renison reminded the government that the colony had applied to the United States for a loan of \$34,000,000 for drainage and irrigation and roads. He reasoned that the response to that application depended on the American perception of the character of the personnel making up the government and their ability to maintain a stable climate attractive to foreign investment in the colony. In the circumstance he doubted whether the moment chosen by the Government to discuss constitutional reforms was the most opportune.

Because the government was not disposed to moderate their ambition, Renison indicated that a new constitution could be produced for the consideration of the Secretary of State on the recommendation of the Governor, or his Government, or by the entire legislature, or by the Legislative Council and interested parties, or by an independent commission. Jagan expressed a preference for a constitution drafted by the entire legislature. At that point Renison reported that it was up to him to recommend constitutional advance to the Secretary of State and he did not think he could do so at that time. He commended the performance of the PPP in Government, noting that they were a cooperative and hard working group of politicians who projected a good image of the government and the colony but advised that in the final analysis it was very important that the impressions formed in the United States, the United Kingdom and among investors in general conveyed the impression of political calm and a commitment to stability in the future both of which would be threatened by agitation for constitutional reforms.

Not unexpectedly the old fear of Communism featured prominently in the discussion. The Governor argued that if the government was suspected of retaining communist ambitions then capital, private or public, would be frightened away and there would be little hope of raising capital to fund the economic development programme. Profumo endorsed the remarks of the Governor and contrasted the reasonableness of the Ministers in the Executive Council with what he complained was their trenchant communist utterances throughout the colony and in the Party organ, the **Thunder**. He cautioned that in reality the most significant factor affecting the colony's credit worthiness was the suspicion of communist influence within the government and implored the government to be tactful and patient and await a more propitious moment to make their constitutional demands.

Turning to the development programme the Governor complained that the economic situation was still unsatisfactory. The colony had depleted its surplus balances in an effort to keep the development programme on course and was dependent on Crown Agents' Joint Consolidated Fund to meet the seasonal shortfall in revenue. But a general problem for all colonies at the time was the heavy demands on this fund which made it increasingly difficult to obtain short term loans.⁸¹ On a suggestion from the Secretary of State, the Government had approached the local banks and received temporary relief but this was not the solution to the problem of development financing. The colony had borrowed

⁸¹ D.J. Morgan, The Official History of Colonial Development, III. A Reassessment of British Aid Policy, 1951-1965, (London: 1980). pp. 186-210.

from the Joint Consolidated Fund on the assumption that the short term loans would be repaid by floating loans on the London Money Market in 1956, 1958 and 1960. The 1956 loan had been raised and the short term loans repaid. Everything then seemed encouraging until doubts had been raised about the colony's credit worthiness. This initial setback had been followed by an increase in bank rates and difficulty in raising money. Collectively, these developments threatened the development programme.⁸²

The Governor regretted that efforts to retain the assistance of the IBRD were frustrated by the Colonial Office. Profumo noted that it was a difficult period for colonial loans. There were too many colonies drawing down on the same sources with the result that funding had become difficult to obtain. He acknowledged that the Colonial Office had been remiss in not replying to letters written some eight months previously but disclosed that they were working on a packet for the colony and that this would be revealed in the summer when the Secretary of State met the Guiana delegation in London.

In his report to the Secretary of State, Mr Profumo, noted that the colony was demanding an early amendment of the Renison

⁸² It would seem that the London money market was very wary of colonial ventures as it considered the political uncertainties which characterised the nationalist period exposed capital to unnecessary risks. But this reluctance was even greater in relation to long term loans when the repayment period extended into the post independent period. Morgan, pp. 186-210 and FIN, 95/01, Part 1, 1954-56. Secret letter of 20 April 1956 and Confidential Memorandum on Borrowing by colonial Governments on the London Money Market.

constitution to allow for a Cabinet or a Council of Ministers.⁸³ Secondly, the colony was demanding the immediate appointment of a committee of all the members of the legislature to discuss and draft a constitution as advanced as that of Trinidad or Jamaica. Mr Profumo observed that while it would be difficult to entertain these demands after only eight months of the Renison Constitution he nevertheless advised that an invitation to the London talks be issued to Jagan, the Governor and the Financial Secretary and during the talks it would be expedient to entertain discussion on the constitution when it might be possible to further utilise the **flexibility** in the constitution but there could be no serious discussion on an alteration of the constitution at this time.⁸⁴

The Under-Secretary of State was conscious of the dilemma which confronted HMG. To engage in talks on constitutional reforms would unsettle local and regional interests and undermine the credit worthiness of the colony. But a refusal to engage Dr Jagan in constitutional deliberations would expose HMG to attacks from a nationalist coalition in the colony. On the other hand if some concessions were made without a Constitutional Conference all parties would consider it necessary to criticise the

⁸³ Ibid., Renison (Profumo) to Secretary of State, No. 10, 19 April 1958. (Signed by Profumo but forwarded by the Governor).

⁸⁴ Ibid.; In fact the trip to London to discuss financing the Development Programme had been proposed earlier by the Governor. CO. 1031/2246, Renison to Secretary of State, 95, 31 March 1958. In his urgent telegram, he listed two other items for discussion; the procedures for consideration of constitutional advance and a programme of country wide electrification. Profumo was therefore endorsing the idea and at the same time postponing a definitive decision on local demand for a more liberal constitution.

concessions as having fallen short of what was expected. It was a difficult situation which HMG would have preferred to avoid but which the colony was intent on furthering.

The Colonial Office was concerned about the pressures exerted on the government for constitutional reforms which continued after Profumo's departure.⁸⁵ A motion by Jai Narine Singh, a Burnhamite, and seconded by Martin Fredericks, a nominated member, "That this Council requests the Secretary of State to receive a delegation to discuss constitutional reforms in British Guiana " created uneasiness within the Colonial Office.⁸⁶

Since it was possible for the motion to be debated before the Guiana delegation departed for the discussions in London in the summer, the problem posed was the quality of the mandate it would provide the Guiana delegation and the obligations a united mandate imposed on the Secretary of State to enter into serious discussion with the delegation.⁸⁷ Whitehall was most reluctant to face Dr Jagan, representing a united front, on the question of constitutional reforms. Such a mandate could not be ignored and it was unlikely that Dr Jagan would allow himself to be circumvented on the issue.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ CO. 1031/2246, Internal Memorandum by Scarlett, 28 April 1958.

⁸⁶ MLC, 5 June 1958.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

The Colonial Office's cautious approach to constitutional development was informed by its sensitivity to the continuing concern of the Washington administration at the reinstallation of a PPP administration.⁸⁹ Within this context of hemispheric concerns the Governor was instructed by the Prime Minister to maintain close and rewarding contact with the Americans, keeping them fully informed of HMG's policies and preferences in the colony and the Governor took this part of his duties seriously.⁹⁰

Another regional concern to which Whitehall was also responsive was the political sensitivity of members of the West Indian Federation. If HMG conceded an advanced constitution in Guiana, the deficient nature of the Federal constitution would be highlighted to the embarrassment of Whitehall but more so, the nationalist leaders within the federation more committed, as they were, to territorial constitutional advance than to the federation. Whitehall therefore realised that if it conceded a constitution superior to the Federal Constitution to Guiana, the motivation for joining the Federation would be lost to Guiana

⁸⁹ CO. 1031/2204, Secretary of State to Colonial Attache, Washington, No. 46, 10 July 1957; United Kingdom Ambassador, Washington to Secretary of State, No. 44, 18 July 1957; FO. 371/126078, Sir H. Cacia, Washington to Foreign Office, 472, 3 July 1957; CO, 1031/2412, Minutes of Minister Profumo's Meeting with the British Guiana Executive Council, 17 and 18 April 1958 in which he repeated expresses concern for appeasing American fears about the political situation in the colony and CO. 1031/2213, Renison to Rogers, 10 June 1958 in which the Governor reports that close consultations are maintained with the Americans.

⁹⁰ FO. 371/126078, Prime Minister to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 413, 14 August 1957; A. Lennox Boyd to Prime Minister, 21 August 1957 and CO. 1031/2213, Renison to Rogers, 10 June 1958.

and similarly the motivation for remaining within the Federation would be eroded.⁹¹

These were fundamental issues with which Whitehall was forced to contend but its primary concern at that stage was whether a concession at such an early stage, however small would not encourage similar or greater demands in the near future? They therefore took the position that Jagan should not be encouraged to think that concessions could be easily won and adopted a policy to be as dilatory as was necessary to frustrate the PPP's demand.⁹²

Whitehall also felt that it was far too early to consider a revision of the Guiana constitution. For the time being they were determined to retain ultimate control through the checks and balances and reserve powers provided for under the Interim government constitution and retained in the Renison Constitution.⁹³ They firmly believed that development funding and constitutional advance were incompatible in Guiana where credit worthiness was vitally important. For the time being credit worthiness was maintained by the checks and balances in

⁹¹ CO. 1031/2246, Secretary of State to Renison, 10 September 1958 and CO. 1032/155, Secretary of State to Renison, No. 36, 23 August 1957.

⁹² Ibid., Memorandum on Colonial Office Strategy for dealing with the British Guiana delegation: Brief prepared by Rogers for Secretary of State. (n.d.) and Colonial Office Minute by Scarlett, 8 April 1958.

⁹³ Ibid.

the Renison constitution but it was undermined by the elaborate demands for constitutional reforms.

Simultaneously there were several critical problems to be overcome before development funding could be obtained and Whitehall was fearful lest Jagan should return to Guiana after visiting Britain without funding for the colony's development and the constitutional reforms which he sought.⁹⁴

But there was no stopping the movement for political liberation in the colony. In the discussion of Jai Narine Singh's motion, Martin Fredericks spoke of a

general and widespread dissatisfaction with the present constitution of this colony and that almost everyone is agreed that a more liberal constitution is necessary before economic progress can be accelerated. Constitutional reform, therefore is rather a matter of urgent necessity.⁹⁵

Much to Whitehall's satisfaction, the debate in the legislature was characterised by opposition expressions of anxiety and fear. With the singular exception of the Member for the North West District, they supported the motion, but qualified their support with the very fears which Whitehall had encouraged over the previous four years. Every opposition speaker expressed a fear of communism, a one party dictatorship, the abuse of minority

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ MLC, 5 June 1958.

rights and religious, racial and/or political intolerance.⁹⁶ At the end of the debate they nevertheless supported a memorandum to the Secretary of State requesting that he receive a representative delegation chosen by and from the Legislative Council to discuss

- (i) Constitutional reform with a view to the granting to British Guiana of a fully self-governing territory within the Commonwealth; and
- (ii) the working out of an agreement between the British *Guiana* and the United Kingdom Governments for a transitional period whereby the United Kingdom Government would exercise control over defence and give guidance on foreign relations other than trade and commerce.⁹⁷

This demonstration of nationalist consensus on an important issue created uneasiness within Whitehall and Washington. Renison deriving some relief from the apprehensions aired by opposition politicians during the debate commented on these fears even before the debate had been completed.⁹⁸ He was impressed with the demands for the rights and privileges guaranteed in western democratic constitutions and he was convinced that the Colonial

⁹⁶ Ibid., 5, 6, and 11 June 1958.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 11 June 1958. This Memorandum, including the minutes of the entire debate, was communicated to the Secretary of State, CO. 1031/2213, 16 June 1958 resulting in the Colonial Office preparing a Secret report on alternative strategies for dealing with the Guiana delegation for the Secretary of State. The report is undated but was used at a meeting with Profumo on 3 July 1958.

⁹⁸ CO. 1031/2213, Renison to Rogers, 10 June 1958.

Office message had at last been communicated to some of the Guianese politicians.⁹⁹ Whitehall was, in response, quick to explore the benefits to be derived from the fears of the opposition. Officials were particularly interested to exploit them to rebut the demands for constitutional reforms, and within a short time a number of options had been worked out and presented to the Secretary of State.¹⁰⁰

In the first instance HMG could inform the Guiana Government that, due to the reservations expressed during the Legislative debate, they were not disposed to discuss extensive constitutional changes. In the second option, HMG could, in view of the fears of the opposition, deem the Government delegation not sufficiently representative for a meaningful discussion of constitutional issues.

A third course allowed HMG, if she was so disposed, to concede constitutional reforms only in time for the 1961 election. This delay could be presented as necessary to allow for a proper assessment to be made of the performance of the Renison constitution. The delay was even more critical in the light of the early termination of the Waddington Constitution. Meanwhile, a broad based Constitutional Committee could be appointed by the Governor to discuss and draft a proposed constitution.

⁹⁹ CO. 1031/2246, Colonial Office Strategy for Dealing with British Guiana Delegation; Brief prepared by Rogers for Secretary of State, (n.d).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Rogers' final suggestion was that HMG insist, in view of the fears expressed, on retaining all the existing constitutional safeguards while expressing its willingness to consider minor changes only at a later date depending on the successful working of the Renison Constitution. The minor changes could include permission to use the designation Chief Minister thus replacing the current title, Leader of the House. HMG could also discuss the appointment of a Finance Minister to replace the Financial Secretary even though the Financial Secretary would retain his place in the Executive Council.

Whitehall was reluctant to delegate responsibility for the conduct of the business of the Executive Council to Dr Jagan even though the recommendation was supported by the Governor. It was considered too great a risk to be taken so soon after the termination of the Waddington and the introduction of the Renison constitution. Additionally, a concession of that nature could be interpreted as likely to produce instability and undermine the credit worthiness of the colony.¹⁰¹

Renison's support for this latter change derived not so much to enhance the status of the Leader of the House but rather to relieve the official section of the House of the blame for the failure of the development plan. Renison had been in the colony for three years but had been unable to secure funding to accelerate the development programme. Over the years it had become increasingly clear that the programme, if it continued to

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

rely on access to the London money market or the support of the HMG Treasury would run to a halt. Renison was also disheartened by the lack of response to a request for access to IBRD which had been made some months previously. In one particular moment of frustration Renison accused Whitehall of indifference to the needs of the colony and on another was caustic about the lack of response to the IBRD initiative. In his own way, he was however, attempting to convert this failure into a strategy to reduce Dr Jagan to public ridicule. Whitehall was sympathetic to both the plight of the Governor and his strategy, but lacked confidence in the reformation of Jagan and the PPP; cognisant of the majority which the party enjoyed in the Executive Council, the Colonial Office was very reluctant to accept the idea.¹⁰²

It was obvious therefore that the Colonial Office was not prepared to concede the demands of the Government. They were still preoccupied with the Jagan factor and the communist threat. They were not persuaded that Jagan's political opinions had been reformed and this made all the difference to their response to the demands emanating from the colony.¹⁰³

Economic and Constitutional Talks in the Summer of 1958.

The Guiana delegation, comprising the Governor, Jagan, Minister of Natural Resources and Financial Secretary, Frank Essex, left the colony for London at the end of June. At the summer meeting chaired by John Profumo, Jagan once again raised the question of

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ The Times, 16 May 1958.

constitutional reforms and self government.¹⁰⁴ Mr Profumo informed the meeting that the Secretary of State was not prepared to consider the granting of internal self government nor was he prepared to authorise an amendment to the Renison constitution at this stage.

As an alternative way forward, Governor Renison recommended the gradual approach to constitutional development and suggested that small concessions rather than major amendment might be possible. The Under-Secretary was prepared to explore this possibility and agreed to the setting up of a Constitutional Committee representing wide interests in the colony to recommend what form the new constitutional should take. There would then be a representative delegation to London to discuss constitutional advance for implementation coinciding with the 1961 election, some small amendments to the Renison constitution might be considered over a period of time.

Turning to development Profumo confessed that they were still not in a position to guarantee funding for the colony's development plan even though a number of alternatives were still being explored. Jagan inquired whether, in the event of HMG being unable to secure the funding, Guiana could seek funding independently on the world market, including Soviet Russia. Mr Profumo was concerned that such a request was made but he felt

¹⁰⁴ CO. 1031/2246, Minutes of a Meeting with a Colonial Office team, 3 July 1958. The Meeting was chaired by Profumo. Present were, Renison, Jagan, F. Essex, Edward Beharry, Rogers, Kennedy, Scarlett and Revell. There were three subsequent meetings on, 7, 9 and 16 July 1958.

that wherever the Government of Guiana went the primary consideration would remain the credibility of the borrower.

Profumo reported that expenditure up to 1959 was estimated at £16,250,000 but of this amount £9,800,000 was required in 1958-59. The Colonial Development and Welfare Fund would provide £1,700,000 while Guiana would contribute £2,200,000 from local resources. There was therefore an immediate need for an additional £5,900,000 which if not raised on the London Money market would be provided by HMG in the form of a loan to the aximum of £5,500,000. He disclosed that further discussions on the financing of the 1960 section of the programme had been arranged but it was hoped that the colony's financial requirements would be met by loans under a renewed CD&W Act. In the meantime HMG was exploring the possibility of raising funds externally. To expedite all arrangements a team of experts would visit the colony to discuss various aspects of the plan with the local administration of the programme.

The Guiana delegation had achieved only a small portion of its mission and was therefore unhappy with the outcome of the 1958 conference. The PPP was determined not to let the matter rest and considered their success in putting constitutional development back on the agenda something of a minor victory. On the other hand HMG did not delude herself that the issue had been settled, knowing full well that it would reemerge at the first opportunity.

The Constitutional Committee, 1958.

In keeping with the declaration of the Secretary of State, the Governor appointed a Constitutional Committee made up of all the members of the Legislative Council under the Speaker, who chaired the Committee.¹⁰⁵ The ex-officio members were appointed non-voting advisors.

There was immediate concern about the representative nature of the Committee.¹⁰⁶ In view of the Secretary of State's intimation that the exercise should involve the widest possible interests represented in the colony, it was thought that parties other than those represented in the legislature might be included on the Committee.¹⁰⁷ The Governor made this point in his first speech to the Committee. He noted that it was the desire of the Secretary of State that the Committee would begin its work by first inviting representation from the public, review the constitution in great detail giving consideration to all points of view, illustrate the voting pattern on every important point on which they had failed to achieve unanimity, publish their report and receive further comments from the public before

¹⁰⁵ CO. 1031/2246, Renison to Secretary of State (Rogers), No. 877, 17 October 1958. See also, British Guiana, Report of the Constitutional Committee 1959. (Georgetown: Government Printery, 1959). (The Constitutional Committee Report 1959). p. 2, para., 1.

¹⁰⁶ Constitutional Committee Report 1959, p. 3, para., 8.

¹⁰⁷ CO. 1031/2246, Renison to Secretary of State (Rogers), No. 877, 17 October 1958.

producing the final document.¹⁰⁸ This was the position until some three weeks later when the chairman announced that he had caused to be published in the press and the Official Gazette a Notice inviting memoranda for consideration and persons desirous of giving oral evidence before the Committee.¹⁰⁹ This disclosure met with the disapproval of the government section of the Committee. They argued that while HMG had indicated a desire for such representations, the representative nature of the Committee made the process of receiving the public unnecessary. Further, the underlying principles informing this viewpoint were corroborated by the precedents of both Trinidad and Jamaica where it was not considered necessary to invite the public. The government commended the advantages to be derived from this procedure in other circumstances but noted that in the case of Guiana, it would considerably delay the work of the Committee and the advantages would not in this case outweigh the inconvenience.¹¹⁰

The opposition disagreed that the exercise would unduly delay the work of the Committee and argued that constitution making for independence was of such moment that the public should be seen to have participated directly in the exercise.¹¹¹ There was no denying the emotional appeal and common sense of the arguments

¹⁰⁸ See text of Secretary of State's statement before Parliament in HCD., 18 July 1958. See, Constitutional Committee Report 1959, p. 2, para., 3.

¹⁰⁹ Chairman Jackson's remarks, Ibid., p. 3 para, 7.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 3, para. 8.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

advanced by the opposition but logic, precedent and the vote, 10-4, were on the side of the government.¹¹² The Chairman hereupon withdrew the invitation to the public.

But even before this vote the Colonial Office had undertaken a desk survey of the type of representative coverage given by the committee composed, as it was, by the members of the legislature.¹¹³ The survey noted that because the representatives had only been elected a little over a year ago they must still be representative of the choice of the electorate; moreover, each of the significant parties was represented in the chamber. It was also possible to assign representation for the important sectors of the economy, bauxite, sugar and rice from among the nominated members. Commerce, ring businesses, the professions and labour were also represented in this group, while Stephen Campbell, the only merindian elected representative, provided representation for the Amerindian community. Whitehall therefore conceded that the Constitutional Committee was a representative organ.¹¹⁴

Initially the Governor had considered providing additional representation from outside the Assembly and had identified McKhoo and John Carter for this task.¹¹⁵ However, his

¹¹² Ibid., p. 3, para, 9.

¹¹³ CO. 1031/2246, Internal Memorandum by Scarlett, (nd.).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State (Rogers), No. 577, October 1958; CO. 1031/2465, "Formation of the People's National Congress", Reuter Despatch, 7 October 1958.

intentions were overtaken by events as Lionel Luckhoo announced his retirement from colonial politics and John Carter's UDP merged with the Burnhamites forming the **People's National Congress (PNC)**.¹¹⁶ In the circumstances it was considered unwise to include them, as to do so was certain to incur unfavourable criticism. He was nevertheless still unhappy that the Committee had deprived itself of the benefit of the public's contribution and in a mild reprimand reminded the Committee that constitutions were of considerable moment to the people and both reason and logic supported their inclusion in the process of constitution making. For his part he would invite such participation in spite of the vote in the local assembly.¹¹⁷

In this particular, the Governor, like the Secretary of State, was adhering to a 1953 position in which it had been agreed that an important element in the process of constitution making is full consultation with the colonial peoples concerned. This new practice allowed for **sounding public opinion in the territories with scrupulous care...** but within the Colonial Office it was agreed that public opinion would be adequately considered through their parliamentary representatives.¹¹⁸ ^{The} Committee began meeting regularly and there was a marked sense of urgency about the conduct of its business. There was general agreement on the most fundamental issue of all, independence. The PNC however always

¹¹⁶ CO. 1031/2483,, Political Intelligence Report on Burnhamite Congress held on 5-6 October 1957.

¹¹⁷ Constitutional Committee Report 1959, p. 4, para., 14.

¹¹⁸ CO. 1032/16, Colonial Constitutions: Internal Memorandum - Ian Watt, 26 May 1953.

differed on the strategy for achieving that goal and the difference became the main area of conflict between the two groups. Burnham accepted the formula advocated by Whitehall for the region which was constitutional advance through the West Indian Federation. The growth of the East Indian population, the confirmed strength of the PPP in the rural areas, his alliance with the racist UDP and the endorsement he had received from West Indian leaders were strong motives for adopting this tactic. Jagan, while not entirely opposed to the ideal of political unity in the region, was still disappointed with the retarded nature of the federal constitution which in his opinion considerably delayed the eventual attainment of independence for the individual territories. It was a belief widely held in the Caribbean and strongly denied within the party that ethnic considerations for his rural East Indian constituency had dampened Jagan's enthusiasm for regional unity.¹¹⁹

The PNC argued that there were few cases in which an independent state surrendered its national sovereignty and identity for membership of a federal arrangement and once it had achieved independence the PPP would be just as reluctant to take Guiana into the federation.¹²⁰ Secondly, the cost of independence was considerable and the colony would be well advised to consider

¹¹⁹ Jagan has always denied this charge but it was clear that after the 1955 split the Indian community increasingly mobilised against the federation. Since the popular support of the was now drawn almost entirely from the Indian community it was not inconceivable that, in spite of his denial in reality this was so.

¹²⁰ Constitutional Committee Report 1959, p. 5, para, 18.

cost sharing within the framework of federal membership.¹²¹ Neither argument was appealing to the PPP and appeared particularly contrived in the light of the Burnhamite election promise to seek immediate and complete self government. The member for Rupununi argued that the colony did not deserve even the minimum measure of internal self government at that time.¹²²

Even though his was a lone voice the fact that he was perceived as the representative of the vulnerable Amerindian community, at a time when HMG was displaying considerable sensitivity to issues affecting the welfare of minorities in so-called plural societies, gave added stature to the discordant view.

There was also general agreement on the subject of internal self-government but once again the opposition demanded constitutional safeguards, the nature of which further aggravated the divisions within the Committee. Internal security was the first issue in this category over which there was a division.¹²³ The government argued that internal security was compatible with self government and in the circumstances the security forces should be put under the supervision of an elected Minister. But it was argued with considerable conviction by the opposition that the government should at all times seek to distance itself from the charge that it had sought to influence the forces and in the light of this caution it was agreed that a Police Service Commission would

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., p. 5, para, 20.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 6 paras, 21-22.

remain independent of the political establishment.¹²⁴ The extent to which there might be political influence in the appointments to these commissions was also an area of concern even though it was eventually agreed that Ministers should not have powers to appoint, promote, or discipline the services. They were only to be responsible for the formulation of policy and for legislation pertaining to the services.¹²⁵ This had been Whitehall's position as early as 1950 when it was reasoned that in order to ensure that the public service was free from political influence it was necessary that the,

machinery for first appointments, promotions and discipline should be kept entirely outside politics and that the body which operates this machinery should be recognised as impartial and authoritative and should enjoy the confidence of the service itself and of the general public.¹²⁶

but

The subject of defence ~~was~~ heatedly debated ^{but} attempts to have control for internal defence retained by the Governor was rejected by a voting margin of ten to three.¹²⁷

On the withdrawal of the ex-officios from the Executive Council there was greater unanimity. It was agreed that the responsibilities of Financial Secretary should be transferred to

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 6, para, 21.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ CO. 1032/23, J.Griffiths to Sir Charles Arden Clarke, 19 December 1950.

¹²⁷ Constitutional Committee Report 1959, pp. 6-8, paras, 23-29. For the actual vote see para, 28.

a minister. The Attorney General should retain his judicial and magisterial functions but ^{be} relieved of his administrative duties which were to be located in an appropriate ministry. The concerns expressed over the control of defence were resurrected in the discussion of the Chief Secretary. The PPP proposed the creation of a Division of Defence and Internal Security as distinct from an External Affairs ministry. The PNC preferred an arrangement in which the Chief Secretary retained control for Defence and some aspects of External Affairs. The Committee voted for the abolition of the post of Chief Secretary.¹²⁸

There was disagreement on the extent to which HMG may be permitted to amend the constitution once the colony had achieved internal self government. The PPP argued that a two thirds majority was adequate requirement for amending the constitution. The PNC argued that the colony could enhance its relations with HMG if the power to amend the constitution was retained by HMG. This argument gained added support when the Committee was reminded Guiana which would of necessity continue to depend on HMG for development finance. The case of Jamaica was cited in which that colony had decided to retain a clause,

**That HMG reserves to Herself, Her Heirs and Survivors
the power with the advice of Her or Their Privy
Council, to revoke, add to, suspend or amend this**

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 8-9, paras, 30-31. See especially, p. 9 para, 31.

Order or any part thereof as to Her or to Them shall seem fit.¹²⁹

But because of the 1953 experience the suggestion, in spite of its merits, was rejected. Another suggestion, that a unanimous vote be required to permit an amendment was rejected because in such an instance one person, could for perverse reasons, inhibit an important amendment.¹³⁰

The voting on a uni-cameral legislature was very close, seven votes to eleven. The arguments supportive of a bi-cameral legislature were made to appear intent on frustrating the will of the electorate and the power of the elected representative to govern. They however reflected the opposition's preoccupation with issues of civil rights and the desire to be protected from arbitrary rule through the retention of the checks and balances which both the Burnhamites and Jaganites had found so objectionable in the Renison Constitution.¹³¹

The opposition's request for the introduction of the system of proportional representation was intended to reduce the preponderance of the PPP and to reinterpret the performance of the other parties. The PNC was dissatisfied with its quota of seats in the legislative assembly when compared with the votes it received, and was conscious that population growth favoured

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 9, para, 33.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 11, para, 36(v).

¹³¹ CO. 1031/2246, See speeches by Gajraj, Jackson, Kendall, Tello and Burnham on Jai Narine Singh's Motion. MLC, 5 June 1958.

the continued preponderance of the PPP through its strong East Indian support. It therefore demanded the introduction of a system of proportional representation. Its brief was that the system produced results that were, mathematically more precise than the system in operation and that, with special reference to the Guiana situation, the system advocated provided better representation for minorities.¹³² In a similar attempt to redistribute representation in the Council, the Governor had covertly fed the idea of PR to the Burnhamites knowing that the results of the election and the desire to increase his influence would make the system attractive to Burnham.¹³³

The PPP rejected some sections of the argument.¹³⁴ They admitted that while there was justice in the contention that the system of "first past the post" did not give a precise mathematical representation of voting patterns it was the preferred system in the Commonwealth. They referred to the fact that in Britain, the 1951 election had produced a Conservative victory with a minority vote but that those results did not prompt the Labour Party to demand the introduction of proportional representation. They further argued that the system encouraged a multiplicity of small parties which produced weak and unstable government. Finally and with special pertinence to Guiana proportional representation

¹³² Constitutional Committee Report 1959, pp. 13-15, paras, 44-48, but especially, p. 13, paras, 44-45.

¹³³ CO. 1031/2625, Renison to Scarlett, 27 October 1958.

¹³⁴ Constitutional Committee Report 1959 , p. 14, para, 46.

would encourage voting along racial lines, which was totally undesirable in the colony.

The PPP nevertheless made a concession to the criticisms of the "first past the post" system by advocating a block vote variation in which each constituency was allotted two candidates and the voter two votes. This suggestion was endorsed with an overwhelming majority.¹³⁵ The PPP recommended a forty eight member legislature while the PNC preferred either twenty four or thirty six members.¹³⁶

Turning to the immediate future the PPP wanted Whitehall to utilise the flexibility of the Renison constitution to concede some immediate demands which were not the subject of serious dispute within the Constitutional Committee.¹³⁷

By January, the Governor was able to report that with but a single exception the Committee was demanding full internal self-government.¹³⁸ But by March the divisions were obvious to all.¹³⁹ By April the *Chronicle* was able to identify a tendency on the part of the PNC to deviate from most of its former positions. In an article that was surprisingly critical of the

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 14, para, 47.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 16, paras, 51-52.

¹³⁷ CO. 1031/2255, Dr Jagan's proposals for Flexible Reforms, first forwarded, 7 April 1958.

¹³⁸ CO. 1031/2246, Political Intelligence Report, January 1959.

¹³⁹ Ibid., March 1959.

party, it observed that whereas in the past, there had been a unified call for full independence by both the PNC and the PPP, the PNC was now advocating internal self government by 1961 and Independence within the West Indian Federation at some unspecified date in the future. The PNC was also arguing that the Constitution Committee made up of all the members, elected and nominated, of the Legislative body was unrepresentative. According to the newspaper it was clear that, in the wake of an election defeat, the PNC had lost its enthusiasm for speedy constitutional change.¹⁴⁰

This was comforting news for Whitehall where the enthusiasm with which the Committee had begun its deliberations had made them despair that the Committee might accomplish its task early enough to produce a clash between a further Constitutional delegation to London and the Development Finance delegation scheduled once again for the Summer.¹⁴¹ A similar convergence had threatened problems for the Colonial Office in 1958, (see pp. 378-385 above), and a possible repeat of that situation in 1959 was not viewed with any enthusiasm.

However, Whitehall need not have feared, for as the Constitutional Committee was about to conclude its deliberations, the PNC, operating from the position that the Committee was unrepresentative, established a Constituent Assembly to provide

¹⁴⁰ The Sunday Chronicle, 5 April 1959.

¹⁴¹ CO. 1031/2246, Scarlett to Secretary of State, 30 January 1959.

for the public participation.¹⁴² This public assembly was chaired by John Carter with Sydney King as its Secretary and soon after its formation King wrote to the Governor informing him that the Assembly was likely to sit beyond the Summer and requested that the Constitutional conference be delayed to accommodate the Assembly.¹⁴³ The Governor was happy to inform him that a Constitutional conference schedule did not exist.¹⁴⁴

The problem which confronted the PNC derived from its desire to join the Federation. Over the months of the Committee's deliberation, the PNC had come to recognise that there was little support for this desire outside the party. It therefore concluded that Jagan would secure the support of the Committee and therefore greater representative authority for his recommendations when the delegation travelled to London. They therefore sought additional credibility by turning to the public, which was in fact only the Georgetown constituencies. But since the process was dilatory, especially beginning as it did in May when the Committee was about to conclude its deliberations, it provided welcome relief to the Colonial Office.¹⁴⁵ The

¹⁴² Ibid., Sydney King to Renison, 6 May 1959.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 4 June 1959.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Renison to Secretary of State, No. 453, 16 June 1959.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Constitutional Committee completed its deliberations towards the middle of May with a vote for independence by August 1961.¹⁴⁶

The divisions within the Committee manifested themselves in six requests, from R.E. Davis, F. Bowman, who had by this time defected from the PPP, R. Tello, Jai Narine Singh, S. Campbell and one from Burnham, A. Jackson and W.O.R. Kendall to submit minority reports.¹⁴⁷ Chairman Jackson, decided against submitting the majority report without the minority reports but these were long in completion and considerably delayed the production of the final document.¹⁴⁸ Then to ensure that he was not confronted with serious constitutional demands at the development funding conference in the summer the Secretary of State announced that he wished to peruse the Report before convening a Constitutional conference.¹⁴⁹ He received additional support from Guiana when subsequently there was another delay when the Chairman decided not to print the Report until the verbatim minutes were available.¹⁵⁰

Each of the reasons advanced by the Chairman for delaying the submission of the final document were reasonable but it is very

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Sydney King to Renison, 4 June 1959; Renison to Secretary of State, No, 453, 16 June 1959 and Scarlett to Secretary of State, 22 May 1959 and The Times, 12 May 1959.

¹⁴⁷ Constitutional Committee Report 1959, Appendix, "C".

¹⁴⁸ CO. 1031/2246, Chief Secretary to Scarlett, 4 July 1959.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., Secretary of State to Renison, No. 48, 3 July 1959.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., Dennis Hedges to Renison, 21 July 1959.

likely that they were encouraged by Whitehall's anxiety over the convergence of the two conferences.¹⁵¹

In its final form the Constitutional Committee recommended complete self government within the Commonwealth with the Queen as Sovereign head of the independent state.¹⁵² It made provision for an all elected cabinet system of government. It relieved the Governor of all residual powers that is, the former reserved powers of veto, certification and disallowance were withdrawn along with the authority of the United Kingdom government to legislate for Guiana. Internal security was to be vested in a Minister but Defence and External Affairs would, in the first instance, be under the supervision of a Defence and External Affairs Council. The members of this Council would be appointed, in equal proportion, by the Prime Minister and the Governor and presided over by the Governor. At the expiration of the life of the first legislature this authority would pass to a Council of Ministers. The forty-eight member legislature would be unicameral *and* elected by the "first past the post" system of voting, but there would be two candidates elected from each of twenty four constituencies by an electorate equipped with two votes. The legislature with a life of four years would be prorogued by the Governor on the advice of the Prime Minister.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., Memorandum by Scarlett, 7 July 1959.

¹⁵² The Report of the Constitution Committee 1959. For a Summary of the Recommendations, see pp. 24-26, para, 84, Sections, 1-27.

The Executive Council was to be composed of the Prime Minister, a Council of Ministers comprised of nine to twelve members, sitting along with a number of Parliamentary Secretaries. The Public Service Commission would become Executive with appointments made by the Governor on the advice of the Prime Minister. The decision on the appointment of a Police Service Commission was to be deferred to a later date. All judges were to be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Prime Minister and a bill of rights was endorsed. In spite of the reservations and intimations of minority reports the Report was signed by all the members of the Committee.

The Opposition supported a constitution providing internal self government only preferring that the colony should proceed to full independence through membership of the West Indian Federation. Their constitution conceding internal self government provided for a bi-cameral legislature with a wholly elected lower house of thirty six members. The Upper House would comprise of twelve nominated members representing the significant influences in the community. They recommended a variation in the electoral system from "first past the post" to proportional representation. They also recommended the Judges should be appointed by a Judicial Service Commission appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

Responses to the Deliberations of the Constitutional Committee

Whitehall tried to maintain an open mind throughout the sittings of the Constitutional Committee but it did not relish the thought

of conceding significant reforms to the PPP within the near future.¹⁵³ Officials agonized over the concessions which the flexibility of the Renison Constitution permitted, and decided against conceding changes before the 1961 election.¹⁵⁴ Whitehall also adopted the position that the measure of advance to be conceded would not be determined exclusively by the Report, however moderate or extreme, but rather by the state of the PPP and its conduct of the Government.¹⁵⁵ But even so Whitehall could not foresee the circumstances which would influence HMG to abandon the reserve powers and other checks and balances as the Constitution Committee recommended.¹⁵⁶

Subsequently it was decided that the very nature of the constitutional demands, irrespective of the divisions within the delegation and the several minority reports, would create problems when the Guiana delegation arrived in London, simply because HMG did not intend to concede a liberal constitution to the PPP.¹⁵⁷ Rogers and the Governor were, however, prepared to compromise. They agreed that, if the Guiana delegation presented a real challenge, they should give the colony a liberal constitution but one stopping short of full internal self

¹⁵³ Ibid., Secretary of State to Renison, No. 30, 14 May 1959.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., Scarlett to Secretary of State, 11 May 1959.

¹⁵⁵ CO. 1031/2246, Secretary of State to Renison, No. 25, 14 May 1959 and Renison to Secretary of State, No. 17, 4 July 1959.

¹⁵⁶ CO. 1031/2246, Internal memorandum by Scarlett, 28 July 1959.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., Memorandum by Scarlett, 28 July 1959.

government. But to reduce the likelihood of being confronted with a serious and unified challenge they decided that the Guiana delegation should be made up of the widest degree of local opinion possible reflecting the broadest range of differences.¹⁵⁸

The second meeting to discuss development funding took place in London during August 1959. Whitehall had still not received the Constitutional Committee ^{Report} but Jagan nevertheless inserted his constitutional demands into the agenda.¹⁵⁹ These were his minimal demands and included substituting the Premier for the Governor as chairman of the Executive Council, the delegation of powers to appoint Heads and deputy heads of government departments as well as members to Boards and Committees and the abolition of the nominated section of the legislature or the appointment of two additional PPP nominee to provide a better working majority for the government in the wake of two parliamentary resignations.¹⁶⁰

In the discussions of the immediate reforms to the Renison constitution, the Governor endorsed some of the changes which Dr Jagan had proposed. These included the Chief Ministerial designation, consultation on government appointments, a Minister of Finance and the Presidency of the Executive Council. Further

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., Rogers to Amery, 6 August 1959 and Rogers to D.Hedges, 2 December 1959.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., Note by Cheddi Jagan, "Suggested Constitutional Changes." 6 August 1959.

¹⁶⁰ Minister Beharry and MP Bowman had resigned from the party. Jagan, The West on Trial, 204.

he did not feel that there was much to be gained by disallowing ministers the right to make appointments to Boards and Committees and supported the application from Jagan for the two replacements for the defected party members.¹⁶¹

On the appointment of a Chief Minister, it was subsequently disclosed that the authority to do so was located in the Legislative Council.¹⁶² On the other hand legal opinion had revealed that under the Renison constitution the Governor had the authority to charge Dr Jagan with responsibility for Finance even though administratively it was still desirable that the Financial Secretary should retain his place in the Executive Council subsequent to the appointment.¹⁶³ Further, if the Governor so wanted it was also possible for him, under the constitution, to appoint an Executive Committee under the presidency of Dr Jagan. However it was at all times imperative that,

the ultimate decision in every matter, considered by the committee is taken by the Governor in Executive Council.¹⁶⁴

This was certainly not what the Governor sought or, for that matter, what Dr Jagan desired. As was mentioned earlier, the Governor wanted to be relieved of the responsibility which the constitution located in him for colonial development, while Dr

¹⁶¹ CO. 1031/2247, Renison in consultation with Whitehall officials, 7 August 1959.

¹⁶² Ibid., Whitehall memorandum by Scarlett, 15 September 1959.

¹⁶³ Ibid., Crunchley to Scarlett, 24 August 1959.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Jagan desired executive authority to initiate and carry through colonial development.

On the substantive issue of the Report of the Constitutional Committee the Governor felt it necessary to place his reservations in the context of developments in the colony over the preceding five years.¹⁶⁵ In the circumstances, it was still imperative that the Governor retain adequate powers to effectively safeguard the constitution. He complained that the ministers lacked administrative experience and therefore could still represent a political risk in the colony. There were a few who had served in the 1953 legislature and fewer still who had served as Ministers on that occasion but even so their experience had been very short. Since then they had acquired only two years administrative experience under the Renison Constitution. It was therefore extremely desirable that the colony be protected from their inexperience. Correspondingly, the lack of administrative experience created a greater dependence on assistance of experienced officials which contradicted the demand to diminish the influence of the officials.

On the other hand, he felt that the political ideology of Dr Jagan and the PPP had not significantly changed. The PPP was still very antagonistic to big business and to the western world in general. What was more Dr Jagan had become an anti-federationist who quarrelled with Dr Williams, the Chief Minister

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., Renison discusses the Constitutional Committee Report with Whitehall officials, August 1959.

of Trinidad and seemed most unlikely to attract capital investment to the colony. In the circumstances the inevitable consequence of Dr Jagan in total control would be the economic decline of British Guiana. The Governor was as pessimistic about Burnham even though he had shown an increasing tendency to be moderate. This the Governor attributed to the merger of his party with the moderate UDP. But he was as inexperienced as the others and would therefore require as much official and administrative guidance.

Touching on another concern, the Governor noted that the colony was becoming racially polarised with neither leader enjoying a wide degree of influence within the opposite racial group. This produced a situation in which an obstructive opposition seemed inevitable and racial confrontation a distinct possibility. The general bifurcation was aggravated by the attitude of big business, which rejected the recommendations of the Constitution Committee. There was a very great fear that business confidence and capital would be undermined with disastrous consequences in a colony where the economy depended so heavily on foreign investments. A similar attitude was undertaken by the educated class fearful of the PPP and communism. In all the circumstances, the Governor recommended a form of internal self government but with control of the internal security of the colony. He also recommended a bicameral legislature with a thirty-six seat legislature elected under proportional representation .

Renison also explained the foundations of a bill of rights in Guiana.¹⁶⁶ In his opinion it sought to prevent the establishment of a communist state or any other form of totalitarianism in the colony. It also provided against the upsurge of racialism manifest in the 1957 election and particularly safeguarded Amerindian rights in the colony. Whitehall's problem was the difficulty which enforcing such a bill had always presented. What was more recent experience had made them wary of a bill of rights enforced by the colonial Governor.¹⁶⁷

Nevertheless by providing such a bill Whitehall would in effect undermine some of its better considered arguments for postponing constitutional advance in Guiana. In spite of all the arguments, ultimately the bill of rights could only be justified as a safeguard against totalitarianism from a communist dominated PPP government. With the safeguards in place the rationale for withholding constitutional advance was further undermined by the decision to retain the Governor's residual powers.

E.W.A Scarlett, while supporting the Governor was particularly concerned about the continuing lack of growth in political organisations.¹⁶⁸ He contended that three years previously there had been room for greater optimism than there was in 1959; despite the passage of time, the colony was virtually in the grip

¹⁶⁶ CO. 1031/2247, Renison in a Colonial Office Discussion, August 1959.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., Memorandum by Scarlett, 15 September 1959.

of a single party. The main weakness in British Guiana, as he saw it, was the absence of a robust opposition. While there undoubtedly were a few communists in the colony he did not think that the introduction of Communism could ever become a serious platform of any of the parties in the colony. He was however certain that enough people did not fully recognise the disadvantages involved in the communist leadership of the PPP in the Government. The growth of racial consciousness in the colony, irrespective of its origins, favoured the PPP, and this reinforced the prospects of the continuing dominance of the party, a factor which had to be taken into serious consideration when reacting to the demands of the Constitution Committee.

While he was not unduly bothered about refusing the full range of demands made by the Committee, there was nevertheless the necessity to concede just enough to prevent a PPP-PNC coalition fuelled by dissatisfaction within both groups with the frugality of HMG's response. Whitehall did not find the minority reports very insightful. The chief usefulness to be attributed to them was their testimony to the general fear of Dr Jagan and the PPP.

When the Secretary of State finally met the Guiana delegation it was not difficult to avoid a commitment to constitutional advance for the colony on the grounds that he had not seen the report of the Constitutional Committee.¹⁶⁹ Dr Jagan expressed concern at

¹⁶⁹ CO. 1031/2246, Secretary of State in Conference with Dr Jagan, 2 July 1959 and Memorandum by Scarlett, 7 July 1959.

the delay in processing the reports but it was noted that the delays were to be blamed on Guiana and not on HMG.

When Jagan presented his list of flexible reforms the Secretary of State rejected them noting that he needed to consider^{first,} the proposals in the Reports before conceding any reforms whatsoever. The Secretary of State was unhappy with the request to appoint Jagan to the Chairmanship of the Executive Council on the grounds that it was a major reform and that would require an amendment to the Renison Constitution which was not possible at that time. He also refused to allow for the replacements of two members who had resigned from the PPP. At which point Jagan accused him of being dilatory. He threatened to resign and seek reelection with the mandate he required.

It was obvious that the Secretary of State did not anticipate this response and it was necessary for the Governor to mediate. He observed that Dr Jagan may have been short of the two members who sat with the opposition but the PPP continued to receive support from among the nominated members. He did not think that Jagan would find it difficult to govern even without his two members. Jagan was not mollified but the Secretary of State was not prepared to make concessions, and so the meeting ended with the promise that the constitutional conference would be held later in the year to discuss the Report of the Constitutional Committee.

Dr Jagan was accurate in his assessment of Colonial Office tactics and this became increasingly evident towards the end of the year. Initially the conference was scheduled for November 1959.¹⁷⁰ It is however important to note that because of the numerous delays the Report did not reach Whitehall until November and as a consequence it was reasonable that HMG should require time to study the Report thus necessitating a postponement to a later date.¹⁷¹ It is however necessary to realise that even if HMG and the colonial Administration had not deliberately cooperated with the dilatory approach which produced the delay, it welcomed it.

The Constitutional Conference: London, March 1960.

Apprehensive of the Report and reluctant to concede reforms HMG exploited every available practical reason to delay the Conference. In the first place there was need to make allowance for the British general election and the possible change in administration.¹⁷² Then the colonial Governor was transferred and time had to be given for the new Governor, Sir Ralph Grey, to become familiar with the constitutional demands and possibilities of the colony.¹⁷³ But before this the absence of a Governor and the outstanding minority reports were adequate grounds for

¹⁷⁰ CO. 1031/2375. Scarlett to Lamacq, 16 September 1959.

¹⁷¹ Colonial Office, British Guiana Report 1959. p. 2.

¹⁷² Ibid., Note by Scarlett, 17 September 1959.

¹⁷³ CO. 1031/2222. Text of a Speech Prepared for Broadcast by Radio to the Colony, 7 October 1959; Dabny to Revell, 8 October 1959; Revell to Lamberger, 27 October 1959 and MacLeod to Renison, 28 October 1959.

another postponement.¹⁷⁴ Subsequently, there was the need for the Guiana government to present its budget for 1960, an exercise which for administrative convenience could not be deferred until the return of the Guiana delegation.¹⁷⁵ Finally a tentative date was set for the Conference to be held some time in January 1960.¹⁷⁶

There was then another request for a further postponement of the Conference to February to facilitate administrative changes in HMG.¹⁷⁷ But because the Princess Royal was scheduled to visit Guiana during the first week of February, the Conference was fixed for the second week.¹⁷⁸ There was the diplomatic consideration preventing, in the unfortunate event of the talks breaking down, the colonial population seeking to vent their anger on the Royal personage.¹⁷⁹

The composition of the Guiana delegation was an important aspect of Whitehall's strategy and the most appropriate balance of divergent political views engaged the minds of Colonial Office

¹⁷⁴ CO. 1031/2375, N.S.Porcher to Scarlett, 5 October 1959.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ CO. 1031/2375, Secretary of State to OAG, No. 47, 20 October 1959.

¹⁷⁷ COO. 1031/2375, Secretary of State to OAG, No. 47, 20 October 1959 and OAG to Secretary of State, No. 39, 17 October 1959.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

thinkers.¹⁸⁰ They requested that the opposition be represented on the Guiana delegation and instructed that the Amerindian representative who was known to oppose any form of constitutional advance be among those selected for the conference. The Colonial Office proposal included three members drawn each from the PPP, the Opposition, and the nominated section. In this arrangement they ensured that the PPP would be outvoted three to six. Among the individuals specially requested by the Colonial Office, apart from Campbell, the Amerindian representative, were Anthony Tasker, the representative of the sugar industry, Rahaman Gajraj whom Whitehall still hoped would one day replace Jagan as leader of the East Indian community and Rupert Tello who had been selected by the American labour movement to lead the Guiana trade union movement.

For personal reasons the actual composition of the delegation did not fully conform to the suggestions from Whitehall.¹⁸¹ The three PPP delegates were Cheddi Jagan, Brindley H.Benn, Minister of Natural Resources, and Balram Singh Rai, Minister of Community Development and Education.¹⁸² The members of the opposition were L.F.S.Burnham, W.O.R.Kendall of the PNC and J.N.Singh, who had split from the PNC to form the Guiana Independence Movement

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., Rogers to D.Hedges, 2 december 1959.

¹⁸¹ MLC, 4 February 1960.

¹⁸² Balram Singh Rai was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the withdrawal of the portfolio from Edward Beharry. MLC, 14 May 1959 and 11 June 1960.

(GIM).¹⁸³ The nominated members were R.B.Gajraj and R.E.Davis. They were joined by the Attorney General, the Financial Secretary and the Deputy Chief Secretary and led by the Governor.¹⁸⁴ Among the elected and nominated representatives everyone accepted the principle of independence for Guiana but beyond that point there was disagreement. The Colonial Office strategy was to work towards a minimum position and to sweeten colonial disappointment with a few reforms of the flexible Renison Constitution.¹⁸⁵ While there were a number of differing views on other matters related to the conference there was unanimity on the minimum concessions to be offered to Dr Jagan.¹⁸⁶

In his opening statement the Secretary of State announced that the conference was not to set a time table for independence since that was the right of Her Royal Highness who would be advised by HMG.¹⁸⁷ The conference was concerned with offering guidance to the Secretary of State so that he could in turn offer relevant

¹⁸³ Colonial Office, British Guiana Report 1960. p. 2; MLC., 4 February 1960. 592 and 5 February 1960. 632-650.

¹⁸⁴ MLC, 5 February 1960.

¹⁸⁵ CO. 1031/2250, W.F.Dawson to M.S. Porcher, 23 December 1959 and CO. 1031/2247, Rogers to Governor, 12 January 1960.

¹⁸⁶ Whitehall officials had been preparing themselves for the conference since the arrival of the Report in late August. There were three major Departmental meetings to assess the Report and plan Whitehall's strategy. CO. 1031/2247 Minutes of Meeting held on 25 November and 10 December 1959. Those attending were Rogers, Kennedy, Dawson, Crunchley, Hammer and Sir Ralph Grey who had been appointed to succeed Renison but had not yet assumed duties in the colony. They produced a Position Paper on Possible Changes to be Granted to British Guiana.

¹⁸⁷ Great Britain, Report of the Constitutional Conference 1960. (London: HMSO, 1960). Cmd., 998. p. 4.

advice to his colleagues in Parliament when Guiana's case was discussed and he preferred that the advice he gave to his colleagues was based on the recommendations of the conference. He admitted an awareness of the differences in opinion within the Guiana delegation but he was optimistic that an open mind would inform the deliberations. He hoped that even when his proposals were unacceptable that there would continue to exist a willingness to implement the proposals.

The PPP stuck to its position of independence within the Commonwealth by August 1961.¹⁸⁸ Jagan argued that while independence was the right of all colonies, most of all it was the source of the national dynamism which Guiana needed to achieve real development. The opposition suggested that the movement to independence should be in measured stages. Burnham declared that Guiana expected nothing less than full internal self government "and the acceptance of the principle of independence for our country".¹⁸⁹ J.N.Singh, as was his custom, demanded independence outside of the Commonwealth immediately.¹⁹⁰

The deliberations were protracted, lasting from the 7 to 31 March 1960, and on occasions acrimonious enough for the delegates to go into recess to reconsider their respective positions. Once again there were differences on the electoral process to be adopted, the number of chambers within the constitution and

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

control over the police. The Secretary resisted efforts to secure a Parliamentary statement from him before the conference was over but admitted that the grave differences were not unexpected.¹⁹¹

The PNC resisted every effort to arrive at a compromise reiterating that the path to independence should be within the West Indian Federation. The PPP once again argued that independence did not preclude entering the Federation and even suggested that independence would enhance Guiana's ability to negotiate an acceptable formula for entry into the Federation.¹⁹² Burnham and others retorted as they had done before that independence was not so much a legal impediment to entry as it was a psychological impediment. Few nations having attained sovereignty willingly surrendered that independence or a portion of their sovereignty for entry into a federation.¹⁹³

It was suggested, at the time, that Burnham was by now converted to the Whitehall principle of no real advance under a PPP government.¹⁹⁴ Burn^{ham} was also convinced that his position could only improve with the passage of time.¹⁹⁵ Further, he realised that his support for independence under the PPP, would enhance

¹⁹¹ HCD. 620, 29 March 1960. 21.

¹⁹² The Constitutional Report 1960. p. 5, and The Constitutional Committee Report 1959. p. 5, para., 18.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ CO. 1031/2625, Renison to Secretary of State, No. 15, 14 April 1959 and The Thunder, 24 April 1960.

¹⁹⁵ The New Nation, 17 April 1960.

the political standing of Jagan and the PPP without increasing his political stature. Burnham was well aware of the **hero and the crowd syndrome** in the Caribbean in which a new charisma attaches itself to the party which secures independence. The nationalist leader is elevated to the local pantheon and the party attracts a larger following almost automatically.¹⁹⁶ Burnham realised that the only chance he had of defeating the PPP was with the assistance of a change in the system of voting and he needed time to build up support for this cause.¹⁹⁷ He knew that the Governor and other influential conservatives in the colony supported him in this quest.¹⁹⁸ Time was of the utmost importance to his designs. There was a definite convergence of interests which he was astute enough to exploit to his advantage.

Compromises were very few and far between. The nature of the legislature was one such compromise. During the Committee deliberations it had been accepted by a vote of eleven to seven that a uni-cameral system was the preferred legislature but in London, Burnham insisted on a bi-Cameral system which the PPP reluctantly conceded on the understanding that a nominated body should not possess the power to frustrate an elected majority.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Archie Singham, The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity. (New Haven: 1968). The author explores the almost mythical reverence with which the successful nationalist leader is regarded.

¹⁹⁷ "The Independence Debate" The New Nation, 27 April 1960.

¹⁹⁸ CO. 1031/2265, Renison to Scarlett, 27 October 1958 and 9 March 1959 and Scarlett to Renison, 18 December 1958 and 13 April 1959.

¹⁹⁹ Jagan, The West on Trial, 203.

The upper house therefore would consist of thirteen nominated members, eight of whom were to be appointed by the majority party, three by the minority groups and two by the Governor.²⁰⁰

On the question of a voting age of eighteen instead of twenty one, the opposition refused to give ground. This was not a new issue. The case for the change had been argued by no less person than Burnham before the Waddington Commission.²⁰¹ Such were his skills that a few years later he argued with equal eloquence and conviction against the measure.

In the end Guiana received a form of internal self-government, with a bi-cameral legislature and a bill of rights.²⁰² In the legislature the Governor retained many of his powers even though his freedom to use them was severely curtailed. In the first instance, most of his powers were now retained in order to protect the services, in relation to external affairs, defence and law and order. These powers were retained unencumbered. In all other respects they were subject to restraint. He no longer retained the power to introduce legislation. Secondly, the power to legislate by Order in Council, though retained, was done so with the assurance that the powers would not be exercised except for the enactment of constitutional instruments to deal with emergencies. His substantial powers to disallow, granted under

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² For a Summary of the Reforms see, The Constitutional Conference Report 1960, pp. 5-12, paras, 12-56.

the 1957 Renison Constitution, were restricted to laws affecting British Guiana stock. This brought the Guiana constitution in line with those of Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados.

The Executive Council was to be replaced by a Council of Ministers. The Council would consist of not more than nine members of whom not more than three and not less than one should be taken from the Senate and one of whom must be the Attorney General. Ministers would be appointed on the advice of the Premier. The Premier would preside over and summon meetings of the Council. The Governor would however be expected to receive all papers issued to members at the time of issue and to be kept informed at all times of the work of the Council. The single constituency electoral system remained unchanged with between thirty two or thirty five constituencies of comparable populations. The system of universal adult suffrage was also retained when the next general election was to be held in 1961.

The police service would be transferred to ministerial control within six months but even before then a Police Council comprising of the Governor, members of the majority party, the Chief Secretary and the Chief of Police, was to be organised to advise the Governor on the administration, provision and maintenance of the force.²⁰³ The Civil Service remained protected by the Public Service Commission which would acquire

²⁰³ Actually it was not until 1 November 1960 that arrangements were completed for the hand over to ministerial control. British Guiana Report 1961. p. 5.

executive status with the introduction of the new constitution. The same would apply to the Police Service Commission and the Judicial Service Commission. In the case of civil servants, their promotion up to the rank of permanent secretaries would be undertaken by the PSC even though the Premier would be consulted on posting. The Chairman of all the commissions would be appointed by the Governor after consultation with the Premier. In the judiciary the Chief Justice would be appointed by the Governor after consulting the Premier but all judges would be appointed by the Judicial service Commission. Control of defence and foreign affairs were remained under the control of the colonial Governor.

The federal debate did not become a feature of the discussion as the Secretary of State did not want it to appear that HMG had influenced in any way the preferences of opposing sections of the Guiana delegation.²⁰⁴

At a subsequent session Jagan demanded interim changes pending the 1961 reforms.²⁰⁵ On this occasion Jagan requested that he be accorded the title, Prime Minister. The Secretary of State did not accept this suggestion which accorded a status exceeding those envisaged in the proposed constitution. He was prepared to concede the title, Premier, which he argued, was equal to the status of the 1961 constitution. He also gave permission for the

²⁰⁴ A Press Release was issued on 1 April 1960.

²⁰⁵ The Constitutional Conference Report, 1960. pp. 5-12, paras, 57-60.

Chief Minister to preside over the Executive Council but only in the absence of the Governor. *He even* offered a Ministry of Finance, subject to the proviso that until 1961 when the post would be abolished, the Financial Secretary would remain advisor to the Minister of Finance and sit in the Executive Council. Both concessions were unacceptable to the PPP who demanded that the Governor cease to preside over the Executive Council and that the Financial Secretary be removed from the Executive Council altogether. A request was also made for the Chief Secretary and Attorney General to be relieved of their ministerial status and be retained as advisors to the Executive Council.

HMG rejected these proposals on the ground that they would involve amendments to the Renison Constitution before the introduction of the 1961 constitution. The Secretary of State argued that HMG recognised the earnestness of the Guiana delegation to have effected almost immediately some of the changes agreed upon but this could not be entertained. He sought to reassure the delegation that a future conference would not be concerned with "the question of substance... save that of independence, the principle of which had been accepted".²⁰⁶ The PPP was not impressed and noted the 1958-59 precedent of Trinidad where in a similar situation HMG had conceded similar demands. Since there seemed little chance of accord it was agreed to terminate the negotiations.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 13, para. 59.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 13, para. 60.

In the build up to the conference HMG had been fearful that a unified delegation would produce enough pressure to win a liberal constitution, but the performance of the Guiana delegation and its ability to disagree on the most elementary of points made it possible for the Secretary of State virtually to impose his will.

The Secretary of State in the preamble of the statement issued to the press announced that,

HMG accepted the principle of independence for British Guiana ... at any time not earlier than two years after the 1961 election under the new constitution or upon it being decided that the West Indian Federation should attain independence, whichever period is the shorter,

HMG would also be prepared to convene another Conference to fix the date for independence.²⁰⁸ The one proviso was that both houses in the new parliament should declare a readiness for independence.²⁰⁹

The Guiana delegation was unhappy with the results of the conference. Statements issued after and attached to the final document attest to this dissatisfaction. In his statement Dr Jagan declared that HMG had rejected the mandate with which the delegation had been entrusted, which was to seek independence and so they were returning to Guiana as colonials. The constitution which they had accepted was in effect an "imposition by

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 5, para. 12.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

discussion". He complained that agreement had been achieved because of the compromises they had been forced to make in an effort to advance the progress of colony.²¹⁰ He was disconsolate in his disappointment and unrestrained in his criticism of HMG. He felt that HMG had pressured the delegation into accepting the inadequate changes by threatening to cancel out all other areas of agreement should the conference brake down. He also felt that HMG had broken faith with the people of Guiana by refusing to honour previous undertakings that constitutional advance once agreed upon would be implemented immediately.²¹¹ Subsequently he accused the leader of the PNC of betraying the Guiana mandate. He concluded that in view of the treatment the colony received at the hands of the British he was justified in resorting to every available strategy in an effort to win independence for the colony. He threatened to resign from the government, to plead Guiana's case before the anti-colonial movements of Latin America, Africa and the United Nations, to boycott official functions and to encourage a colony wide boycott of all British goods.²¹²

Burnham was disappointed that control of the police and internal security had not been transferred to a Minister or that the Presidency of the Executive Council had not been conceded to the Premier. Burnham argued that once the principle had been

²¹⁰ Ibid., Annex "B" Statement by Dr Jagan.

²¹¹ WICC, LXXV, 1348, April 1960. 94.

²¹² Ibid., 84-87.

conceded from August 1961, "reason, logic and sentiment" demanded that the Premier be accorded the right to do so immediately.²¹³

He was made unwelcome by various anti-colonial organisations in the United Kingdom including the West Indian Students Union in London for putting his personal ambitions ahead of the welfare of the colony.²¹⁴ But Burnham had gambled on a number of possibilities. In the first place the PPP had secured less than fifty percent of the votes at the 1957 election and this encouraged him to think that with a switch to proportional representation would considerably enhance the chances of defeating the PPP at the 1961 election. Additionally it was felt in most opposition camps that given the 1957 electorate results a coalition of the non-PPP votes would defeat the PPP. The Colonial Office argued with relative consistency that once the opposition parties united they would be in a position to pose a more serious challenge to the PPP.²¹⁵ Burnham obviously pinned his hopes on a combination of these options.

Before proceeding to the Constitutional Conference, for example, the PNC had begun talks with the leading Portuguese businessman, Peter D'Aguiar, in an effort to attach the Portuguese and Georgetown business community vote to the PNC.²¹⁶ Much of this

²¹³ The Constitutional Conference Report, 1960. Annex "C", Statement by Burnham.

²¹⁴ Burrowes, 109.

²¹⁵ CO. 1031/2247, Memorandum by Scarlett, 15 September 1959.

²¹⁶ Spinner, 76-78 and Burrowes, 115-119.

vote has previously been shared between the UDP and the NLF but the majority stayed aloof from Guiana politics finding it difficult to identify with the causes espoused by the popular parties. Burnham now hoped that the fear of Independence would force this group to seek alignment with one or other of the political parties in an effort to defend its interest. His case was helped when the UDP joined up with his party and when Luckhoo resigned from the NLF leaving it marooned under the leadership of Cecil Gray.²¹⁷

With no other party of even moderate popularity around, Burnham affected the air of moderation and courted Peter D'Aguiar, a successful Portuguese businessman and friend of the Catholic Church. Of critical importance was the fact that D'Aguiar was perceived as the leader of the Portuguese community in the same way as John Fernandes had been seen in earlier times.²¹⁸ Additionally, D'Aguiar was far and away the most successful local capitalist with an excellent record as an employer, making him a power influence among the clerical section of the urban community as well.

Time was therefore as important to Burnham and the PNC as it was to the Colonial Office and for the same ultimate purpose: the defeat of the PPP. Burnham needed time to cement relations with D'Aguiar, the Georgetown business elite and the Portuguese vote,

²¹⁷ CO. 1031/2247, Memorandum by Scarlett, 15 September 1959 and 1031/2246, Renison to Secretary of State, (Rogers). No. 577, 17 October 1958.

²¹⁸ Burrowes, 114.

to persuade the coloured upper and East Indian business class and others that the PNC offered them their greatest protection against a communist government in an independent Guiana and to convince the Colonial Office that he was the man to back in Guiana. Burnham therefore embraced the anti-communist crusade against the PPP with greater fervour.²¹⁹ This brought him closer to the moderate leaders of the West Indies and made him a far more attractive choice to the Colonial Office.²²⁰

With his new credentials Burnham reckoned his chances of persuading Whitehall to support his proposals for electoral reforms were very good indeed and success in this effort would considerably enhance his party's chances at the 1961 election. When therefore proportional representation was rejected he was very disappointed and the commitment to Independence for Guiana after the 1961 elections aggravated his concerns.²²¹

Conclusion

In spite of the political protestations the conference certainly achieved more than the performance of the delegation warranted and, in particular, the commitment to independence was a significant triumph. While not as advanced as expected the

²¹⁹ See political Radio broadcast, 27 March 1961 in Burnham, A Destiny to Mould, 9-13.

²²⁰ CO. 1031/2482, W.J. Wallace to Sir Edward Beetham, 26 March 1957.

²²¹ Proportional Representation was an unpopular electoral system with both the Conservative and Labour Party. It had been attempted in a few colonies with unsatisfactory results and HMG was therefore not prepared to experiment with it further. Additionally, West Indian nationalists including Williams had voiced their objection to the system.

constitution was by no means less developed than those in the other Caribbean governments. The colony had won internal self government and a promise of independence no later than 1963.²²²

The statement issued by the Secretary of State was of the utmost importance in that it committed HMG to the grant of independence to Guiana. It was very doubtful whether a unified delegation would have forced HMG to concede immediate independence to the colony. It is however conceivable that under different circumstances HMG might have been moved to a more definitive pronouncement on independence for the colony, but there was nothing to suggest that HMG would have conceded independence to any colony in such a vast leap forward.²²³

Because of the 1953 suspension Guiana's case was entitled to special consideration. In its final briefing before the Constitutional conference Whitehall had already taken the position that a colony with Guiana's limited population and unknown resource potential could not achieve independence in the foreseeable future. At another level Whitehall decided prior to the conference that the colony did not deserve constitutional advance on its own and would only benefit from constitutional advance because all the other major West Indian islands had recently been granted advanced constitutions and the West Indian

²²² WICC, LXXV, 1348, April 1960. 81-84.

²²³ Ibid., The Press Release is reproduced at 93-94. See also, The Constitutional Conference Report 1960, p. 5, para, 12.

Federation was likely to become independent within three years.

It is clear therefore that the aim of the Colonial Office was to provide just enough change to keep the opposition satisfied and to prevent them joining the PPP in another All Party Conference ^{ch} would win the support of other West Indian leaders and the various anti-colonial lobbies. In the case of Guiana more than in most cases therefore HMG was firmly wedded to the idea of measured advance and progressive devolution towards full self government.

It is however significant that in spite of the disunity of the Guiana delegation and the prior decision to concede only limited advance that HMG had committed herself to independence for Guiana. It is possible that HMG might have been reacting to renewed pressures in the UN where throughout 1959 HMG and other colonial powers faced unceasing demands for them to reveal their plan for decolonisation and in particular for them to disclose the target dates for colonial independence.²²⁴ HMG had resisted in the usual manner by protesting against interference in her internal affairs and threatening to withdraw from the Organisation if pressed too far but as was the custom HMG always

²²⁴ FO. 371/145271, Target Dates: W.S. Ryrle (CO) to K.J. Uffen, (FO). 31 March 1959.

found it expedient to at least convey the impression of voluntary cooperation.²²⁵

Nevertheless the 1961 election presented the Colonial Office with two important opportunities. It was a stalling point against which to preface all changes. All change would be introduced after the 1961 election. Secondly, it was another opportunity to have the party challenged for electoral paramountcy in the colony. The Colonial Office like the PNC hoped for a favourable sign from the 1961 election.

²²⁵ Ibid., NY. Un Mission to Secretary of State, No. 131, 13 November 1959; Ibid., No. 989, 1 December 1959, Sir P Dixon NY, UN. to Foreign Office No 413, 5 December 1959; A.B.Cohen to C.G.Eastwood, 21 December 1959.(Confidential); Sir F Dixon UN to Foreign Office, No. 370, 17 November 1959, and FO. 371/ 139754, Washington to Foreign Office, 27 May 1959.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

THE DEFEAT OF THE PPP AND THE TRIUMPH OF AN INTERNATIONAL OPPOSITION

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the troubled years 1961-1964. During this period the Guianese electorate returned the PPP administration to office for the third successive time. However in a desperate bid to delay the independence process the opposition successfully adopted extra-legislative means to destabilise the administration. The result of their actions was a period of unrelieved civil strife accounting for considerable loss of life, damage to property and the undermining of the authority of the PPP administration. Attention will also be directed to two inconclusive constitutional conferences held in London in 1962 and 1963 and on the mediatory role of the UN. Particular attention will be given to the interplay of the external influences of Washington, the United Nations and the international media with decisions affecting political and constitutional developments in the colony. The chapter concludes with the eventual exclusion from office of the PPP consequent on the adoption of a new electoral system and the formation of an alternate coalition administration after the December 1964 election.

The 1961 British Guiana General Election

After the Constitutional Conference of 1960, the various political groupings in the colony realised the profound

significance of the general election scheduled for 21 August 1961 and their respective preparations were informed by an unprecedented urgency. It was also clear that whichever party won the election would lead the colony into independence. But among the opposition parties there was also the fear of a PPP administration with a self-governing constitution in which the Governor's residual powers had been reduced. The New Nation, organ of the PNC noted,

The forthcoming elections are of tremendous importance. They usher in a new constitution under which elected Ministers will have absolute powers over and responsibility for all internal affairs and which is but a prelude to full untrammelled independence within a matter of months.¹

Winning was therefore critical since the ideology, economic orientation, class and ethnic preferences of the victorious party would influence the immediate future but even more importantly, the course of post-colonial development. The UF warned, **"If you vote wrong, you may not vote again in a hurry"** suggesting that the **"PPP and PNC will be rods of slavery for your backs"**² The various political alliances and economic cleavages were therefore very concerned about the future welfare of their respective interests in the post-colonial period. The Church was not to be outdone. The Archbishop of the West Indies, declaring Day of Prayer, warned that **"The elections were fraught with grave danger"** while the Roman Catholic Bishop demanded that every

¹ Text of PNC political broadcast, 27 March 1961. The New Nation, 7 April 1961.

² The Daily Chronicle, 4 and 18 August 1961.

catholic should do his duty and vote against Communism.³

The PPP was still committed to a national front government and continued to explore the potential for rapprochement with the PNC.⁴ The merger with the UDP had consolidated its popular appeal by bringing into the party the popular middle class politicians, the coloured Georgetown lawyer John Carter, Black New Amsterdam businessman Kendall, Amerindian businessman Eugene Correia and local government leader, Llewellyn John.⁵ When later the former PPP stalwart, Sydney King, joined the PNC he was appointed general secretary and editor of the party's organ, New Nation.⁶ But since 1957 the PNC had expanded its membership, first by securing the support of the Federated Union of Government Employees, (FUGE), British Guiana Civil Servants' Association, (BGCSA), British Guiana Teachers' Association, Transport Workers Union and Post Office Workers' Union. These were all trade unions with a Black predominance and essentially

³ Ibid., 6, 13 and 20 August 1961.

⁴ Ibid., 16 August 1961 and Jagan, The West on Trial, p. 205.

⁵ Despres, pp. 261-262; Green, Race vs Politics in Guyana, (Mona: 1974), p. 47; P.Hintzen, The Cost of Regime Survival: Racial Mobilisation, Elite Domination and the Control of the State in Trinidad and Guyana, (Cambridge: 1989), pp. 46-56; Premdas, Voluntary Associations and Political Parties in a Racially Fragmented State: The Case for British Guiana, (Georgetown: 1972), pp. 16-28 and R.Glasgow, Guyana: Race and Politics Among Africans and East Indians, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp.118-120.

⁶ Up to the time of King's appointment the party's organ The New Nation, was more or less an ordinary weekly party news sheet with a predominantly urban circulation. King turned it into a political pamphlet similar to The Thunder and expanded its circulation.

centralised urban executive. Later still it had added the predominantly Black Police Force and the nursing association to its list of supporters. Subsequently, the popular Guianese academic Rawle Farley lent considerable prestige to the organisation.⁷

Over the years the party had also consolidated the support of blue collar workers at the principal bauxite mining areas, MacKenzie, Christianburg, Wismar, Everton and Kwakwani.⁸ Through its extended membership the party had by 1961 come to wield considerable influence in critical spheres of the economy and administration of the colony.⁹ It therefore responded unenthusiastically to the coalition initiatives emanating from the PPP.

The moderate sections of the PNC, particularly the UDP arm, were confident enough of the party's popular support to reject the overtures emanating from the PPP, preferring to concentrate on an alliance with the conservative elements in the community, middle class East Indians and Portuguese, especially the business elite. They endeavoured to harness the influence of this group thereby enhancing the its own influence with the electorate,

⁷ The Daily Chronicle, 27 February 1961.

⁸ Greene, 47; Glasgow, 118 and Despres, 262.

⁹ For interesting analyses of this process see, Premdas, **'Political Parties in a Bifurcated State'** PhD Thesis, University of Illinois, 1970. 76-84; Hintzen, 46-56; Greene, 18-26 and 34-53, Glasgow, 110-113 and Despres 251-262.

Whitehall and Washington.¹⁰ But the more militant section of the party was suspicious of a merger with the coloured and Portuguese middle class. Historically they had shared antagonistic relations with the Portuguese and coloured community and preferred to use the franchise to reduce the influence which these groups had acquired through political patronage received from the colonial administration and economic alliance with the sugar industry.¹¹ This section of the party still preferred an understanding with the PPP. Some still believed that the split was a nationalist ploy to defeat colonialism and win independence for the colony.¹² Preoccupations of this nature were dealt a severe blow when in October 1960 the conservative section of the Guianese population coalesced under Peter D'Aguiar forming a new political party, the **United Force, (UF)**.¹³

One consequence of this support was the perception of the party as the refuge of the conservative and commercial elite. With its strong commercial orientation it was assured of the support of the Senior Chamber of Commerce, large landowners and the coloured middle class professional.¹⁴ The conservative community which had since 1947 been forced to exercise its influence from a distance now considered it imperative that they return to the

¹⁰ Hamilton Green, From Pains to Peace: Guyana 1953-1963, (Georgetown: 1987). p. 58.

¹¹ Brian Moore, Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society (Gordon and Breach: 1987). pp. 51-76.

¹² Green, 49.

¹³ Despres, pp. 256-260 and Greene, 20-21.

¹⁴ Ibid.

political arena for fear of being injured in the post-colonial rearrangement of influence and patronage under Jagan and the PPP.

The United Force also won the immediate support of the religious community and other hitherto uncommitted groupings and consolidated the perception of the party as an organisation incapable of defending the cause of the working people, and particularly, the Black electorate.¹⁵

Because it diverted significant sections of the urban middle class vote brought into the PNC by the UDP, the UF was, from the beginning, a severe challenge to the PNC. D'Aguiar, through his alcohol and beverages industries, had acquired the reputation of an aggressive native capitalist and an enlightened employer.¹⁶ Additionally, the party's ambitious development programme promised full employment which was very attractive to the urban Black unemployed. These attractions were noted by the PNC and gradually created a situation in which increasingly the party appealed to ethnic sympathy to retain command of its urban constituency.¹⁷

¹⁵ See Despres, 256-259; Green, 56; Greene, 20; Glasgow, 16-119 and Premdas, Party Politics and Racial Division in Guyana, (Denver: 1973), pp. 5-12.

¹⁶ Banks Breweries was opened in 1959. Even though it was recognised as a "potagee business place" which preferred to employ "potagees and red people" the few Blacks who succeeded in securing employment there were well treated and were envied by others. (Potagee = Portuguese)

¹⁷ Despres, 258-259.

Whitehall welcomed a moderate party such as the UF. For one thing it had always argued that a multiplicity of parties offered the electorate a wider choice and consolidated the democratic tradition in the colonies.¹⁸ For another, the United Force was openly conservative, capitalist and pro-white. The fact that the party was at pains to project a multi-ethnic image suggested the probability of another party making inroads into the PPP's constituency, a factor which would have been welcome. Finally, although Whitehall had, by this time, decided to rely on the PNC, because it was moderately, but nevertheless, socialist and led by Forbes Burnham, the lesser of the two evils in Guiana, whom no one trusted, it would nevertheless have preferred to deal with an influential conservative force in the colony. Colonial policy throughout the Caribbean and in much of Africa indicated Whitehall's preference for transferring power to moderate political leaders and the preference in British Guiana was no different.¹⁹

The electoral campaign was the most bitterly contested so far in the colony. The two most distinguishing features were the ethnic politics of the major parties and the anti-communist tactics of the UF. Towards the end of the campaign physical violence became

¹⁸ CO 1031/2625, British Guiana Talks, 1960. The Electoral System: A Brief prepared for the Secretary of State, December 1959 and 1031/55, Smaller Colonial Territories: Colonial Policy; Annex: Political Advance in Colonial Territories. Revised Draft Report of Official Committee, 1 March 1956.

¹⁹ The Robertson Commission Report 1954, p. 70.

an adjunct of ethnic politics.²⁰

It seems reasonable to argue that all the parties recognised the importance of multi-ethnic support for an electoral majority and each tried to achieve this by attempting to effect multi-ethnic mass support or through various forms of coalitions. The fact that these efforts failed was as much a result of the racial straitjacket in which the PNC had, by this time, become imprisoned as of the ideological conflict surrounding "communism".

Communism, as has been shown above, became an important factor in the 1947 election campaign. It achieved a much greater significance in the 1953 and of course, 1957 campaigns. In 1961 it was the most significant plank in the platform of the UF and even the PNC was not reluctant to exploit it.²¹ The local Churches, especially the Anglican and Roman Catholic denominations, and related religious organisations such as the Christian Social Council, the Defenders of Freedom and the Catholic Sword of the Spirit, inspired, organised, and funded by the American based, Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, campaigned openly against the PPP and communism.²² Dr Fred Schwartz, the

²⁰ By this time Jagan, in warning of the serious consequences of ongoing violence called on the PNC to call off "Operation Hoodlum." The UF concurred with the request to the PNC. The Daily Chronicle, 11 and 12 August 1961.

²¹ The PNC found it convenient to distance itself from the radicalism which characterised much of the PPP rhetoric and especially its Marxism. PNC, The Future with the PNC: We're No Pawns of East or West, (Georgetown: 1960).

²² The Daily Chronicle, 9 May 1961 and 20 June 1961.

vitriolic American anti-communist crusader, campaigned for the UF, providing films, film units, and a host of anti-communist literature for the occasion.²³

The robust involvement of religious organisations was due to two factors. In the first instance, Peter D'Aguiar was a pillar of the Roman Catholic church. He was a leader of the Portuguese community from which the Catholic church drew the bulk of its significant leadership. Another contributing factor was the fact that over the years D'Aguiar had acquired a reputation as an international leader of the Moral Rearmament Movement, a religious movement with a political agenda.²⁴

In the second place, the Churches were incensed by the determination of the PPP to reduce their influence in the education system. In January 1961 the previous PPP administration had introduced legislation to this effect and the Churches were in an unforgiving mood.²⁵ Primary schools in the colony were administered by the various denominations which received annual grants from the government for teachers' salaries, the maintenance of buildings and school equipment. The

²³ Reno, pp. 32-33 and Leo Despres, "National Politics in British Guiana for the Development of Cultural Theory." American Anthropologist, LXVI (October, 1964), 1065.

²⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 9 May, 1961 and 17 and 18 August 1961.

²⁵ MLC, 12 January 1961. "The Education Amendment Bill, 1960: an Ordinance to Amend the Education Ordinance." No. 31 of 1960; "Letter from The Prelate" The Guiana Diocesan Magazine, January 1961. Report in The Daily Chronicle, 6 January 1961 indicating that both the Anglican and Roman Catholic bodies had commenced legal action against the Ministry of Education.

denominations retained full control over education and administrative policies, which resulted in mounting criticism because of alleged biases in the recruitment and promotion teachers belonging to other denominations.²⁶ The non-Christian Indian teacher was the most seriously affected, for while each denomination catered to its own, the Indian was forced to relinquish his religion and adopt, what was for him, an alien faith to secure employment and ensure promotion.

The PNC had advocated a modification of the system and Burnham, as Minister of Education had introduced a similar bill in the 1953 Legislative Assembly.²⁷ When legislation was tabled in early 1961 authorising the takeover of fifty one denominational schools, two religious pressure groups, the Citizen's Committee and Defenders of Freedom, were organised by the affected denominations to publicly protest against the new law and to petition HMG for its disallowance.²⁸ A significant aspect of the campaign was the argument that government's action **"constituted the thin edge of the communist wedge."**²⁹ The PNC, supported the denominations arguing against the legislation and suggesting that there was a racist motivation behind the ~~government's initiative.~~³⁰

²⁶ **MLC**, 15 December 1960 and 11 January 1961

²⁷ **MEC**, 25 August 1953.

²⁸ In actual fact the Churches mounted a public campaign against the Bill which included a mass rally at Bourda Green, a public square where political meetings were held in the city on 16 January 1961 and a one day closure of all schools, 30 June 1961

²⁹ **The Daily Chronicle**, 11 July 1961.

³⁰ **MLC**, 23 December 1960.

Since 1947, however, the Church had not permitted itself to be sidelined in political issues. As we have seen, since 1947 the Church had struggled on the side of the forces which, in the first instance, sought to obstruct the grant of adult suffrage and subsequently, to defeat the evil represented in the communism it identified in the PPP. In 1961, it considered itself bound to an even more vigorous battle against the PPP.³¹

Because this fear was associated with the perceived communism of the PPP a robust anti-communist line was sustained throughout the electoral campaign. In this respect the UF and the religious organisations identified an effective coincidence of interest. Both drew on their international connections and the colony for the duration of the campaign became the international battlefield in the war waged against communism. Influential Senators, speaking in the American Congress, drew attention to the likelihood of the establishment of a new Communist beachhead on the north coast of South America should the PPP emerge victorious and lead the colony into independence.³² They were instrumental in despatching a variety of anti-communist agitators to the colony where they joined in the campaign on the side of the UF

³¹ The Daily Chronicle, 16 January 1961. The Archbishop contended that the conflict was being waged between those who **"believed in God on the one hand and those who do not believe in God on the other."**

³² The most articulate were Senators Thomas Dodd, (Democratic, Connecticut) and John H. Rouselot, (Republican, California).

against the PPP.³³

Internationally the election was viewed with much suspicion. Two visiting Members of Parliament, representing the Conservative and Labour parties, saw the contest as a choice between, **"parliamentary democracy and totalitarianism."**³⁴ Lord Malcolm Douglas Hamilton, (brother of the Duke of Hamilton, heir presumptive to the Earldom of Selkirk, former member for Inverness but resident in the US), claimed that he had been recruited by capital interests both in the US and the UK to lobby support for the anti-Communist parties fighting the PPP.³⁵ After a short visit to the colony he arrived in Washington and warned that **"Communists were hoping to form a bridgehead in British Guiana"** and that they were **"threatening to turn British Guiana into another Cuba."**³⁶ Noting that the opposition needed jeeps, loudspeakers and transmitters he sought support for \$500,000 US funding, **"to swing the election away from the PPP."**³⁷ He warned that **"At all cost we must stop Jagan winning the**

³³ Some of the more notable personalities included Dr Fred Schwartz and Dr Joost Sluis of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade.

³⁴ Report of a press conference held by visiting Mps Peter Topswell (Conservative) and John S. Amstey (Labour) on 13 March 1961. The Daily Chronicle, 14 March 1961.

³⁵ Report of a press conference held in Georgetown on 28 June 1961 and a speech he delivered at the RACS on 29 June 1961. Ibid., 29 and 30 June 1961.

³⁶ Associated Press, 4 and 6 July 1961, The Washington Globe, 5 and 7 July 1961.

³⁷ Ibid., 7 July 1961.

election."³⁸ This sentiment was echoed by Senator Thomas J.Dodd who warned of **"a serious danger that a communist regime may be set up in British Guiana"** and proposed top level talks between US and UK government officials to determine what should be done in Guiana.³⁹ In one of the earliest attacks on the PPP, Dodd warned that Guiana was,

even more dangerous than the Emergence of Castro. Castro at least is cut off from the Latin American mainland by hundreds of miles of ocean. But a communist British Guiana would for the first time give the Kremlin a bridgehead on the South American continent, a bridgehead through which Cuba and the Soviets could feed in arms and provide support for communist guerilla movements in Venezuela, in Brazil, in Colombia and in all the surrounding countries.⁴⁰

In the subsequent weeks his charges grew in stridency and his prescriptions became increasing outlandish.

Papers such as the conservative Daily Express concurred, warning that HMG should not hesitate to repeat the firm action of 1953 should Jagan win the election.⁴¹ It found that the Americans saw the communist **"danger very clearly. They already have Castro on their doorstep in Cuba. With Jagan in power in British Guiana, communism would have two outposts on the American Continent."** In a specific plea to HMG the paper pointed out, **"We owe it to**

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 17 July 1961.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1 July 1961.

⁴¹ The Daily Express, 4 August 1961.

our allies not to multiply their problems."⁴² It advocated, "immediate, dramatic and aggressive action."⁴³ A similar plea from Senator Dodd prompted a colleague to enquire whether he was advocating armed intervention, "to nullify the democratic decision of the people reached after free and Democratic elections."⁴⁴ The Senator was convinced that any measure was justified in preventing the spread of communism to the American continent. But both Senator Dodd and Lord Hamilton eagerly reminded their audiences that it was President Kennedy who, in an address to the American Society of Newspapers Editors in 20 April, had warned that if the Nations of the Hemisphere failed to meet their commitment against communist penetration in the region, then his Government would not hesitate in meeting "its primary obligation which was the security of its own nation."⁴⁵ While advocating prudence another source observed that Jagan "certainly talked like a Marxist and has had a lot of kind things to say about Russian Communism and Castro's Cuba."⁴⁶

The American press and many of the Senators were convinced that once the colony had achieved its independence the PPP would establish a communist state. This fear was deep-seated and would

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 12 August 1961.

⁴⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 9 August 1961.

⁴⁵ Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Including the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements to the Press: John F. Kennedy, 20 January to 31 December 1961. (Washington: 1962), The Kennedy Papers, No. 138, pp. 304-305.

⁴⁶ The Baltimore Sun, 21 August 1961.

influence international responses to whichever party was successful at the polls. It was also expressed by Kennedy on a number of occasions. He firmly believed that regimes such as Jagan's tended to mislead the electorate, exploiting both their aspirations and the democratic system on which they depended for the fulfilment of those aspirations. In 1961 for instance he argued that,

The legitimate discontent of young people are exploited. The legitimate trappings of self-determination are employed. But once in power, all talk of discontent is repressed, all self-determination disappears, and the promise of a revolution of hope is betrayed. ⁴⁷

Burnham, noting the growth of anti-federation sentiments in Jamaica, was now less enthused with the West Indian Federation and supported the PPP demand for immediate independence for Guiana within the Commonwealth. Repeatedly he vowed that as soon as the party won the election he would agitate for independence, so that **"when the West Indies were celebrating their independence in May next year, British Guiana would be celebrating hers as well."**⁴⁸ Stressing that the electorate must decide which party it wanted to lead them to independence he pointed out that

Guiana must get independence immediately after the General Election in August, immediately after the party gets into

⁴⁷ The Kennedy Papers; 1961. No. 138, p. 306.

⁴⁸ The Daily Chronicle, 26 June 1961. This statement was made in response to the June 16 Whitehall's announcement of 31 May as the date on which the West Indian Federation would achieve its independence.

power.⁴⁹

A few days later he reiterated his stand claiming,

"Whichever party is returned in a majority, either directly or indirectly, has got the right to lead the country to Independence."⁵⁰

Much to the annoyance of the conservatives within his party he added that he would support any party which got into power on the independence issue because the election of a Government **"was the wish of the people and there was nothing any other Party could do but support the Government on Independence."**⁵¹ Sensitive, however, to the concerns of the conservative elements who dreaded the inevitable Indian preponderance in the colony, and consequently the political process, he stressed the need for a Bill of Rights which protected minority interests in the colony.⁵²

The election was set for 21 August 1961.⁵³ There were 246, 171 registered voters out of a total population of 560,402.⁵⁴ On the 27 July, nomination day both the PNC and the UF presented candidates in all 35 Constituencies while the PPP presented candidates in 29 constituencies only, avoiding four Georgetown

⁴⁹ The Guiana Graphic, 13 July 1961.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 15 July 1961.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² The New Nation, 16 June 1961.

⁵³ MLC, 13 and 17 May 1961 and 8 June 1961.

⁵⁴ British Guiana, Report of the General Election of Members of the Legislative Council 1961, (Georgetown: 1962). Appendix, 1, Table, 1.

and the New Amsterdam constituencies that were predominantly Black as well as the Amerindian Rupununi constituency.⁵⁵ The other party, the Guiana Independence Movement, (GIM), the personal political organisation of Jai Narine Singh indicated three candidates. Unlike on other occasions there were only five independents, two of whom were the expelled PNC general secretary, Sydney King, and Richard Ishmael, the president of the BGTUC and MPCA who withdrew from the UF. In all there were one hundred and seven candidates but nine had withdrawn by polling day.⁵⁶ These included all the independents as well as the candidates sponsored by the GIM.⁵⁷

The care with which each party attempted to present a multi-ethnic list of candidates, ~~betrayed~~ the strong undercurrent of race politics which characterised the "house to house" and small group electioneering.

⁵⁵ The Guiana Graphic, 28 July 1961.

⁵⁶ The Report of the General Election 1961, Appendix, 1 Table, 1.

⁵⁷ Sydney King withdrew on 29 July, Donald Trotman, UF, on 9 August, **The GIM**, 17 August and Independents on 18 August 1961.

Multi-Ethnic Base of Party Nominations for the 1961 Election.⁵⁸

PARTY	E.I.	BLACKS	POR' SE	CHI' SE	EURO	AMER	TOTAL
PPP	14	12	3	-	-	-	29
PNC	6	24	3	1	-	1	35
UF	14	12	3	3	1	2	35

The campaign was as robust as any in the colony and there were occasions when one or the other of the parties complained of violence directed at its membership particularly at open air street corner meetings. PPP meetings were frequently interrupted in the urban constituencies and both parties experienced similar difficulties in the rural constituencies of the PPP. There were serious incidents of physical violence directed against the PPP and though the leaders advocated a peaceful campaign and enjoined their supporters to abstain from violence the indications were that the violence was centrally directed and aimed mainly at the PPP and the UF.⁵⁹

All the parties appeared confident of electoral victory. So enthused were supporters of the PNC with their prospects that on the day before the elections, they paraded the streets of the city with their party's symbol, the broom, sweeping the opponents

⁵⁸ Compiled from reports in The Daily Chronicle, 20 August 1961 and The Official Gazette, 31 August 1961.

⁵⁹ The Daily Chronicle, 11, 12 and 13 August 1961.

out of contest and office.⁶⁰ This was an exaggerated and violent misuse of the party's electoral symbol. The unprovoked violence of this display, it has been claimed, angered and alienated many who in utter disgust voted for the UF.⁶¹

Polling was conducted in a peaceful manner and the results confirmed the optimism of the PPP who won twenty seats. The PNC was disappointed with its twelve while the UF disappointed at winning only four had reason to celebrate its two victories in Georgetown.⁶²

PARTY	CANDIDATES	BALLOTS	AVERAGE	SEATS
PPP	29	93,085	42.6	20
PNC	35	89,501	41.	11
UF	34	35,771	16.3	4
TOTAL	98	218,357	99.2	35

(The Results of the 1961 General Election)⁶³

The most significant aspect of the results was that the PPP with 42.6 percent of the votes cast or about 37.8 percent of the

⁶⁰ The Guiana Graphic, 21 August 1961.

⁶¹ Simms, 151.

⁶² The party polled absolute majorities in both Central and North Georgetown constituencies where, in spite, of its upper class residents the PNC believed that its inner city working class support would guarantee its victory.

⁶³ Compiled from The Report of the British Guiana General Election 1961, Appendix I, Table (3).

electorate had won 20 seats while the PNC, with 41 percent votes cast or 36.4 percent of the electorate, had won 11 seats.⁶⁴ The PNC had increased its popular support by 6 percent while the PPP had lost 5 percent of its support since the 1957 election.⁶⁵ Twenty eight candidates lost their deposits. These included two from the PNC, three PPP and twenty three from the UF.⁶⁶

The turn out at the polls was once again very high, varying from 94.3 to 71.8 percent with 19 of the 35 constituencies polling over 90 percent, while 12 polled in excess of 80 percent and only 4 of which 3 were interior constituencies, polling 70 percent.⁶⁷

On the other hand the PPP won four marginal seats in which the major ethnic groups were evenly mixed; this helped it to retain some semblance of its original mass based credential in spite of evidence of predominantly ethnic preferences at the polls. The PPP polled heavily in the rural areas, the PNC in the urban areas and the UF in the Amerindian Roman Catholic constituencies. Its two victories in Georgetown were attributable to middle class coloured support in those areas.⁶⁸

A number of factors contributed to the high poll including the

⁶⁴ Ibid., Appendix, 1, Table 1.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Appendix, IX, (1), Table (11).

⁶⁶ Ibid., Appendix, IX. (1), Table (III), B.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Bradley, 18, para., 6 and The Daily Chronicle, 24 August 1961.

keen interests which the campaign aroused throughout the colony, the belief that the wellbeing of each ethnic group depended on the results, the improved organisational structure of the parties especially the PNC and the fact that the victorious party would lead the colony to independence.

The performance of the UF was disastrous, prompting many to fear for its future.⁶⁹ It must be admitted that while its supporters in the press tended to overrate the party's support particularly in the rural areas, a factor which undoubtedly misled the leaders of the party, in general the party tended to perceive itself as the party which would hold the balance of power. In the circumstances the results should not have been such a disappointment to the leaders. But among the organisers, particularly those of the urban middle class, who invested large sums in party literature, offices, administrative personnel, vehicles and incentives the results were especially disappointing. On the other hand the victory of D'Aguiar over the PNC's chairman, Winifred Gaskin, indicated that among the urban Indians, the UF was preferred to the PNC. This factor was attributed to anxieties generated largely, though not solely, by the PNC "Sweep them Out" campaign conducted just prior to polling.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid., 17 para., 5.

⁷⁰ Simms, 151 and Burrowes, 128-129.

The Aftermath of the Election: the PPP and the Washington Administration.

The PPP was very pleased with the results and there were huge rallies and celebrations across the colony.⁷¹ One motorcade dragging an effigy of Burnham through the streets of the city aroused great anger among Blacks already outraged that PPP supporters in the city by voting for the UF had deprived the PNC of the two seats which the UF had won.⁷²

But throughout the colony many Black supporters of the PPP, even those who had voted for the UF in the urban areas, were offended by the partisan nature of the PPP celebrations and particularly the ethnic overtones underlying the PPP victory cry, "**awe pan tap.**"⁷³ They now entertained genuine fears for other ethnic groups in an independent Guiana under the PPP.⁷⁴

The PNC was extremely disappointed with the results. In the beginning its leaders were disposed to blame the UF for splitting the vote and so let the PPP in.⁷⁵ This point is not supported by a careful examination of the statistics which indicate that the PPP scored absolute majorities in most of the constituencies

⁷¹ **The Guiana Graphic**, 24 August 1961.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "We are in control." Despres, 264.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ **The Daily Chronicle**, 24 August 1961 and Simms, 151.

in which it was victorious.⁷⁶ But the fact that the UF had won two urban seats in what was hitherto considered safe PNC constituencies was a bitter pill. At a mammoth post-election meeting Burnham in vengeful mood blamed the UF and the Church for the PNC defeat.⁷⁷ In very acrimonious tones he reminded his supporters at a large "thank you" meeting that the Legislative Assembly was not the only political battle ground of the party. He warned that

The People's National Congress controlled the city, the People's National Congress controlled the heart of the country, the People's National Congress, as the election results have shown, also controls the urbanised and industrialised areas of Guiana....

It was clear that though defeated the party had made significant gains confirming its influence in strategic sectors of the colony.

The expatriate economic sector immediately pledged its willingness to work along with the PPP.⁷⁸ It had cooperated with the 1957 government and felt that it could similarly

⁷⁶ The Report of the General Election 1961, Summary of Votes Gained by Political Parties. Appendix, IX, (I), Table (III), B.

⁷⁷ The Daily Chronicle, 24 August 1961.

⁷⁸ Mr David Powell, Deputy Chairman, Booker Bros., McConnell in an earlier press release committed the company to support the elected government and the quest for independence. Three months later the pledge was reiterated by the Chairman. Ibid., 12 March 1961 and 13 June 1961. After the elections there were similar pledges from R.R. Follett-Smith, Director of Bookers, and the Chairman, Demerara Bauxite Company. Ibid., 27 August 1961 and 1 September 1961.

cooperate once again. The Church now also counselled prudence and support for the elected government.⁷⁹ The TUC also pledged its willingness to cooperate with the Government.⁸⁰ The Chairman of the PPP requested the support of the UF and the PNC respectively in winning development funding and independence for the colony.⁸¹ This call was repeated by the Premier a few days later but evoked no enthusiasm in the opposition camps.⁸²

The more responsible British Press took widely divergent, though individually predictable, views. The Times, whose reporting reflected a moderate, if sympathetic, approach to colonial politics expressed concern about the political affiliations of the PPP but admitted that Jagan was **"not another Castro."**⁸³ It observed that the large PNC vote could provide a democratic brake on the radicalism of the PPP and encourage Guiana to rethink its stand on federation.⁸⁴ The Daily Telegraph, felt that both **"Washington and London will have to think again in terms of a perennial problem. Should aid be withheld because of political uncertainty or can politics be established through aid?"**⁸⁵ The Scotsman, in accepting the results observed that Jagan was in too great a hurry for independence and wondered **"will he now hasten**

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1 August 1961.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3 September 1961.

⁸¹ Ibid., 23 August 1961.

⁸² Post election press conference, Ibid., 25 August 1961.

⁸³ The Times, 23 August 1961.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ The Daily Telegraph, 23 August 1961.

the transition to independence?"⁸⁶ The left wing The New Statesman, in commenting on a Radio Moscow broadcast extolling the PPP victory in Guiana, noted that

The Americans have already begun to make hysterical noises about the dangers of Communism becoming established on the continent, fearful that Dr Jagan will become another Castro.⁸⁷

The Manchester Guardian, which reflected left of centre views on nationalist politics, welcomed the results and hoped for the best but noted that racism had become a real problem in the colony.⁸⁸

The American press was pessimistic. The New York Herald Tribune's comment was typical of the negative anticipations.

Expected though it was, Cheddi Jagan's victory is hardly an occasion for rejoicing. He may not be a Communist, but at least is close enough to it to be a potential source of serious trouble.... His enthusiasm for Castro at least shows doubtful powers of judgement.⁸⁹

The Washington Post was less pessimistic. While accepting that there was cause for concern, it noted

It is too early to say whether Monday's election means that this British colony will be lost to Mr Khrushchev. It may well be that the pessimists are right in describing Dr

⁸⁶ The Scotsman, 23 August 1961.

⁸⁷ The New Statesman, 23 August 1961.

⁸⁸ The Manchester Guardian, 23 August 1961.

⁸⁹ The New York Herald Tribune, 23 August 1961.

Jagan and his wife as the pliable instruments of international communism. But it would be a mistake to reach a conclusive judgement in the absence of more facts.⁹⁰

The New York Times was the exception. It cautioned that Jagan was no Fidel Castro and predicted that if the US handled him with "'understanding and sympathy' British Guiana can become a desirable member of the Latin American system."⁹¹

In Congress, Senator Stephen M. Young, a Democrat, suggested that Washington should talk Finance with Guiana.⁹² He was not widely supported but with two others, Gale W. McGee and Frank Church, criticised those who had earlier argued that the US should have prevented the PPP victory.⁹³ Young argued that there was "no surer way of pushing British Guiana into the Communist orbit, than to declare it an enemy, and treat it as such at this early date and without any proof."⁹⁴ The Chicago Tribune reported that the PPP victory did "no good to the US and the other countries in the hemisphere."⁹⁵ It reasoned that with independence Guiana would become another Cuba, "a Russian foothold on the South American continent. Economically it would

⁹⁰ The Washington Post, 23 August 1961.

⁹¹ The New York Times, 23 August 1961.

⁹² Associated Press, 25 August 1961. The Daily Chronicle, 26 August 1961.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ The Chicago Tribune, 1 September 1961.

endanger important North American and British investments."⁹⁶

There was no denying the negative perceptions and predictions that the electoral results in Guiana prompted in the international media and it is necessary to place this reaction in terms of concurrent hemispheric problems confronting the Washington administration. The Cuban revolution had become a reality in 1959 and relations with Cuba had grown increasingly strained ever since. An abortive attempt in April that year to invade the island had seen the American financed expedition routed. American capital had been appropriated and before long America would have reason to assume that its security was threatened by Soviet missiles based in Cuba. American capital had been invested in large quantities throughout Latin America and representatives of "international capitalism" felt a Cuban commitment to "international communism" threatened their investment in Latin America as it had been threatened in Cuba. Many were concerned that the mere idea of communist insurgency in the hemisphere destabilised the investment climate and endangered profits. These fears though genuine were enormously exaggerated both by the Washington cold warriors and the American press. Kennedy had inherited the Cuban problem and wanted to solve it. The Bay of Pigs was a severe embarrassment which the cold warriors were not prepared to have him forget.

On the other hand HMG appeared to have accepted the third electoral victory of the PPP with equanimity, and demonstrated

⁹⁶ Ibid.

a willingness to work along with the party. This is borne out by at least one American source which reported that, despite Washington's apprehensiveness, HMG endorsed the PPP administration and requested a similar response from the American administration. In doing so HMG contended that Jagan had been elected by democratic process and there was therefore no alternative to a PPP government.⁹⁷

Jagan was therefore made Premier and invited to form the government.⁹⁸ In the new Council of Ministers, Jagan assumed responsibility for Development and Planning, Brindley H. Benn, who had succeeded Burnham as Chairman of the party, for Natural Resources, Balram Singh Rai for Home Affairs, Ram Karran for Works and Hydraulics, Ranji Chandisingh for Labour, Health and Housing, Charles Jacob for Finance, F.H.W. Ramsahoye, Attorney General and E.M.G. Wilson for Communication. Two Parliamentary Secretaries, G. Bowman, Ministry of Natural Resources and L.E. McR. Mann, Ministry of Works and Hydraulics were appointed. R.B. Gajraj was appointed Speaker of the House.⁹⁹ Janet Jagan was the notable omission. Speculation was rife that she might have been appointed the Speaker but subsequently it was disclosed that she was required to organise the party's drive to recapture and consolidate its multi-ethnic base.¹⁰⁰ While this might

⁹⁷ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in The White House, (Boston: 1965). p. 778.

⁹⁸ The Daily Chronicle, 25 August 1961.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 6 October 1961.

¹⁰⁰ The Thunder, 8 October 1961.

have been true it was nevertheless believed that she had been withheld in an attempt to reduce anti-PPP hostility from the media, which tended to present her as the most radical communist in the party exercising considerable anti-western influence on the government.¹⁰¹

Immediately after the 1961 victory the PPP expressed a desire to visit the USA in search of development funding.¹⁰² State Department officials, encouraged by the moderate tone of Jagan's campaign and his post-election speeches, wanted to personally assess the Guiana premier and let it be known that when there had been communication expressing a desire from Guiana the State Department would most certainly be willing to consider financial aid to the colony.¹⁰³ Chairman Benn was quick to respond indicating that Guiana would seek American aid for the development plan.¹⁰⁴ Shortly thereafter a State Department release indicated that President Kennedy would receive Dr. Jagan.¹⁰⁵ The initial exchanges encouraged great optimism that at long last the virtual embargo on American funding to Guiana was at an end.¹⁰⁶ Even the usually hostile Trinidad Guardian, apprehensive of growing economic links between Guiana and Cuba for instance, was optimistic, and cautioned that a rebuff at that

¹⁰¹ Spinner, 82.

¹⁰² The Daily Chronicle, 25 August 1961.

¹⁰³ Reuter, 24 August 1961. Ibid., 25 August 1961.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1 September 1961.

¹⁰⁵ Associated Press, 5 October 1961.

¹⁰⁶ The Editorial, The Daily Chronicle, 8 October 1961.

stage would force Jagan to look elsewhere for development funding.¹⁰⁷

Arthur Schlesinger, special assistant to the President, suggests that prior to the visit the Kennedy administration was apprehensive of the PPP administration, coming into office as it did so soon after the Bay of Pigs episode in Cuba in April; but, conceding that Jagan had been democratically elected on three consecutive occasions and more especially because HMG seemed willing to work along with the party, Washington was prepared to seek common ground with the Guianese leader.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, Whitehall had requested Washington's cooperation to keep Jagan from going over completely to the Communists.¹⁰⁹ In the circumstances the State Department allocated a \$5,000,000 contingency vote for Guiana.¹¹⁰

Jagan arrived in the US on the 13 October 1961 and was greeted by a hostile press. The New York Journal America, which like The Washington Post, was compulsory reading on Capitol Hill, was outraged. "How many Castros does our State Dept need before it learns to tell friend from foe?"¹¹¹ The Journal argued that any aid given to Guiana, "an outright follower of the Moscow

¹⁰⁷ The Trinidad Guardian, 15 October 1961.

¹⁰⁸ Schlesinger, p. 665.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. and HCD, 648, 6 November 1961. 22.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The New York Journal America, 13 October 1961.

line", would make America "the laughing stock of the world."¹¹² The article concluded that "If the State Dept cannot tell friend from foe then the President should straighten out its sights."¹¹³

Jagan was interviewed by a panel of the National Press Club on 15 October and appeared on television on 17 October. Wary of further offending an already hostile American Press, Jagan toned down his enthusiasm for international communism. However, he felt that it was not necessary for him to be critical of Communist regimes either. In the end his performance, especially his reluctance to be critical of communism in general and the Soviet Union in particular, was unconvincing and disturbed the press. The Washington Post reasoned that Jagan "did not help his cause with his performance."¹¹⁴ The New York Daily News predicted "The odds are, he will do a Fidel Castro in Guiana if he can," and warned the President to have "nothing, but nothing, to do with Cheddi Jagan."¹¹⁵

The President viewed a segment of the televised press conference and it rekindled his unease about Jagan and the PPP whereupon he ordered a thorough reexamination of the Guiana case. He also issued instructions restricting any commitments to the Guiana delegation until he had first interviewed Jagan later in the

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ The Washington Post, 17 October 1961.

¹¹⁵ The Daily News, 17 October 1961.

month.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless a press release hinted that the Kennedy administration might have been **"prepared to take a calculated gamble and make a 'modest' loan"** to Guiana.¹¹⁷ Two days later The New York Journal America, incensed by the willingness of the State Department to fund a communist regime, revealed that the State Department had itself listed Jagan as a communist and scoffed at a recent re-assessment that there was, **"a fifty-fifty chance of making a friend of Jagan."**¹¹⁸ By this time Jagan was becoming aggrieved with the negative press he was getting and retorted that it was not democracy in Guiana which was on trial since his administration had been democratically elected by elections conducted by HMG. Rather it was American democracy which was on trial.¹¹⁹

When he met Kennedy on 25 October Jagan was told,

I want to make one thing perfectly clear. We are not engaged in a crusade to force private enterprise on parts of the world where it is not relevant. If we are engaged in a crusade for anything, it is national independence. That is the primary purpose of our aid. The secondary purpose is to encourage individual freedom and political freedom. But we cannot always get that; and we have often

¹¹⁶ Schlesinger, pp. 665.

¹¹⁷ State Department Release, 20 October 1961. The Daily Chronicle, 21 October 1961.

¹¹⁸ The New York Journal America, 23 October 1961.

¹¹⁹ PPP, Towards Understanding, (Georgetown: 1961). The text of Jagan's speech at National Press Club Luncheon, 24 October 1961. p. 7.

helped countries which have little personal freedom, like Yugoslavia, if they maintain their national independence. This is the basic thing. So long as you do that, we don't care whether you are socialist, capitalist, pragmatist, or whatever. We regard ourselves as pragmatists.¹²⁰

At the end of the session Kennedy was unimpressed by what he thought was Jagan's evasiveness on questions relating to communism and concluded that "in a couple of years he (Jagan) will find ways to suspend his constitutional provisions and will cut his opposition off at the knees." ¹²¹

In spite of Kennedy's own reservations, Schlesinger wrote that the President was persuaded by the British argument that there was no alternative to working with Jagan. He nevertheless withheld development funding, promising only to despatch, at a very early date, an American economic mission to the colony.¹²² He was also apprehensive that Guiana might develop into another Cuba and reportedly urged Britain to delay political independence to the Jagan government.¹²³ This decision was critical for in the ensuing years there was nothing to suggest that Washington ever reversed this position. What was more the determination to prevent Guiana becoming an independent state under Jagan

¹²⁰ Schlesinger, 665-666.

¹²¹ Ibid., 667.

¹²² State Department press release, 29 October 1961. The Daily Chronicle, 30 October 1961.

¹²³ Schlesinger, p. 668; Warren I. Cohen, Dean Rusk, (New Jersey: 1980), p. 204 and Richard J. Walton, Cold War and Counter-revolution, (New York: 1972), pp. 201-213.

underpinned American policy toward the colony.

Jagan was disappointed with the outcome of the discussion but the media was happy.¹²⁴ The New York Daily Mirror rejoiced: "**not a penny to British Guiana.**"¹²⁵ The New York Herald Tribune, quoting a State Dept source, revealed that there was "**still grave doubts about Dr Jagan's communism.**"¹²⁶ The local press treated the matter more calmly than usual. They emphasised the fact that there were "**promises**" of "**possible American aid,**" and as if to add immediacy to the promise reported that US experts would shortly investigate the needs of the colony.¹²⁷

Jagan was deeply disappointed with the overall result of his American trip but this only hardened his resolve to win independence for the colony. HMG had undertaken to grant independence to the colony two years after the 1961 general election or the granting of independence to the West Indian Federation, whichever came first and so after the announcement on 16 June 1961 of 31 May 1962 as the date on which West Indian Federation would become independent Jagan felt free to renew his demand for Guiana's independence. On his return to the colony therefore he introduced the Independence Motion which was debated in the local assembly over a three day period.¹²⁸ The United

¹²⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 26 October and 1 November 1961.

¹²⁵ The New York Daily Mirror, 27 October 1961.

¹²⁶ The New York Herald Tribune, 27 October 1961.

¹²⁷ The Daily Chronicle, 29 October 1961.

¹²⁸ MLC, 1 November 1961.

Force tabled an amendment requesting a Referendum on the issue which was voted down by the PPP and the PNC.¹²⁹ Only the four UF members opposed the substantive resolution, with both the PPP and PNC voting for independence by 31 May 1962.¹³⁰ The PNC vote was important because since the election Burnham had been showing signs of wavering from his earlier election declaration.

Jagan invited to the Tanganyikan independence celebrations, undertook to discuss with the Secretary of State, Reginald Maulding, arrangements for Guiana's independence talks.¹³¹ While in Tanganyika, he lobbied world leaders on supporting the case for Guiana's Independence and African leaders for support in the reconstitution of Guiana's nationalist movement.¹³²

On 13 December, on his way from Tanganyika Jagan met the Secretary of State and was disappointed with his response to the Guiana request. Maulding promised to consult with his Cabinet colleagues and communicate a response through the Governor.¹³³

Jagan, however, learnt through Lord Perth, the Minister of State, that independence talks were unlikely to be scheduled

¹²⁹ Ibid., 4 November 1961.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 31 May 1961.

¹³¹ Government Press Releases, 11 and 25 November 1961.

¹³² The Thunder, 10 December 1961.

¹³³ HCD, 653, 8 February 1962, 603-604 and for a detailed report on fixing a date for British Guiana Constitutional Conference, Ibid., 659, 2 March 1962, 199-200. For Jagan's interpretation of what took place see his Statement at the 1252 Meeting of the Fourth Committee. General Assembly, Official Records, (GAOR). A/C.4/515, 18 December 1961. p. 4.

before March 1962.¹³⁴ Whitehall was involved in a number of conferences and British Guiana had not been timetabled. In view of its 1960 commitment to British Guiana, and in particular the Independence of the West Indian Federation proviso, this must have been, at the least, a terrible oversight and Maudling's promise to consult with his colleagues and communicate a response to Jagan did not impress the Guianese leader.¹³⁵ Expecting the worst, Jagan immediately petitioned the UN for permission to address the Fourth Committee, on 18 December on British Guiana independence.¹³⁶

The Special Committee on Colonialism adopted a serious approach to Jagan's motion. HMG raised an objection to Jagan's resolution, as was their custom on such occasions, on the grounds that Guiana was a colony and the Committee would therefore be in violation of HMG's internal affairs.¹³⁷ The UK representative having made the standard objection indicated no opposition to Jagan's presentation, inviting him to speak from the seat of the UK delegate. Jagan dissented considering it inexpedient to do so since he intended to be critical of HMG's colonial policy.¹³⁸ Jagan addressed the Committee, was questioned and thereafter a resolution calling on HMG " **to discuss the date and arrangements**

¹³⁴ The Thunder, 17 December 1961.

¹³⁵ GAOR, A/C.4/515, 18 December 1961. p. 4.

¹³⁶ Ibid., A/C.4/S514. 1251 Meeting of the Fourth Committee, 15 December 1961. p. 603.

¹³⁷ Ibid. pp. 603-604.

¹³⁸ Jagan, The West on Trial, p. 268.

to be made for the attainment of independence by British Guiana" was moved.¹³⁹ Throughout the earlier deliberations HMG had maintained that an independence conference or, indeed independence, was not a critical issue in Guiana. The problem was that HMG had timetabled six independence conferences for 1962 and along with the Commonwealth Prime Ministers conference HMG did not think that the Guiana conference could be accommodated.¹⁴⁰ Discussion on the motion was postponed until 15 January 1962, after the Christmas recess, but on 14 January HMG undertook to hold an independence conference in May 1962.¹⁴¹

The UN had never entertained such a petitioner before but granted the request in view of a recent success by the anti-colonial lobby which in 1960 passed Resolution 1514 (XV). This Resolution had assumed a more interventionist role, **vide** para. 5, demanding that

Immediate steps shall be taken, in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservations, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as a race, creed

¹³⁹ GAOR, A/C.4/SR/1254. 1254 Meeting of the Fourth Committee, 19 December 1961. p. 619.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Whitehall press release 14 January 1962. An interesting aspect of this discussion was the fact that HMG's Secretary of State for the Colonies, touring the West Indies in an attempt to rescue the faltering West Indian Federation, had steadfastly refused to comment on the subject having first declined an invitation to visit the colony.

or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom.¹⁴²

In the circumstances Guiana became the first non-self governing territory in the history of the UN to have its petitioner heard.

The announcement of the date for an independence conference created tensions within the opposition in Guiana which were difficult to contain. The opposition must have been particularly apprehensive at the attitude of the UK as displayed at the UN; it conveyed the impression that HMG was still disposed to grant independence to Guiana under the PPP government. Not only had they gained an insight into HMG's apparent commitment to independence for Guiana but so too had Washington which must have been even more disappointed by the relaxed attitude of the UK representative.

The 1962 Budget, the February Civil Disturbances and their Consequences.

The American trip had failed to produce the development funding which the Government very badly needed to launch its 1960-1964 development programme.¹⁴³ In addition, the fear of independence

¹⁴² **General Assembly Resolution, 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960.**

¹⁴³ See for instance **The Daily Chronicle**, 31 January 1962 for a press release in which the American Economic Officer at the Consulate General Office, Edward B. Rosenthal, noting the general despair hastened to reassure the Guianese public that the US government was sympathetic to Guiana's need for development funding and was prepared to assist once the necessary feasibility studies had been concluded. While such statements were reassuring the fact was that the PPP government was very short

under a PPP administration had triggered a gradual but increasing flight of capital from the colony.¹⁴⁴ The bauxite company had announced increased investment but had called on the government to demonstrate the capacity to win the confidence of international capital.¹⁴⁵ Jagan's failure to persuade the Americans to invest in the colony was greeted with widespread criticism.¹⁴⁶ The chorus of opposition criticism resulted in opposition demands for the resignation of the government.¹⁴⁷

As a consequence of ongoing capital shortages the government was virtually bankrupt, having invested its reserves in land development schemes in order to hasten the launch of its agricultural programme. Its difficulty stemmed from the failure of both HMG and, even more crucially, the Development and Welfare Fund to make good on promises of development finance.¹⁴⁸ The government was therefore forced to prune its development

of funds and was becoming increasingly desperate.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 6 February 1962.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 2 January 1962.

¹⁴⁶ The New Nation, 14 January 1962.

¹⁴⁷ The Daily Chronicle, 21 January 1962.

¹⁴⁸ In 1959-60 WI, Development and Welfare approved \$1,667,500 but issued \$312,500; in 1960-61 it approved \$1,096,000 and issued 1,355,000, in 1961-62 it approved 1,236,500 and issued 2,332,500 but again in 1962-62, it approved 2,896,167 and issued only 1,749,167. The unreliability of the issues was as much a problem as was the restricted amounts voted in the first place. D.J. Morgan, Official History of Colonial Development, III, A Reassessment of British Aid Policy, 1951-1965, (London: 1980). 205-207. At the same time new colonial loans on the London Money Market had almost disappeared. In 1962 for instance Guiana could only raise an Exchequer loan of £650,000. HCD, 661, 5 June 1962. 43-44.

programme and scale down the size of its work force.¹⁴⁹ This was felt most severely in the urban wage earning sector, and was interpreted by the urban-centred opposition as political discrimination.¹⁵⁰ Simultaneously, the UK immigration bill, interpreted as intending to keep the Black and coloured colonist out of Britain, encouraged many to opt for immediate passage to London, thus increasing the drain on local capital and fuelling the charge that skills were being frightened away by fear of PPP communism.¹⁵¹

It was in these circumstances that the 1962 budget was prepared. Jagan had invited the Cambridge Professor of Economics, Nicholas Kaldor, to prepare the budget. Jagan lamented that on assuming office the administration

was faced with a grave financial crisis. A huge deficit was anticipated in the 1962 recurrent budget. This was principally due to the large amount which was payable to civil servants, teachers and policemen in fulfilment of the recommendations of the Guillebaud Salaries Commission. Payment was due to be made for the increases in salaries not only for 1962 but also for 1961. This alone amounted to \$4,000,000; and there were other incidental increases.

¹⁴⁹ Burrowes, pp. 143-144.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ **HCD**, 650, 28 November 1961. 233-234, for an exchange between Mr Chapman and Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan on the subject of colonial fears generated by the Commonwealth Immigration Bill 1962 and Ibid., 658, 11 April 1962. 109-110, for an interchange between Mr Deedes and R.A. Butler, Secretary of State of the Home Department on the same subject.

There was also the problem of rising budgetary surpluses at home to finance a bigger capital development programme, particularly industrialisation, for the solution of the ever-pressing urban unemployment.¹⁵²

The Minister of Finance urgently required \$15,000,000 for certain extraordinary expenses, \$3,500,000 for the Guillebaud salary increases and \$1,500,000 for expenditure on infra-structure.¹⁵³ He argued that the budget was intended to attack the problem of underdevelopment and economic inequality. It therefore

envisaged an impartial system of progressive taxation, which distributes the burden equally between those who derive income from property, and those who get their incomes from work as an urgent necessity.¹⁵⁴

The budget in form and content was intended to force the commercial sector to make a meaningful contribution to colonial revenue. There was a capital gains tax, an annual tax on property, gifts and semi-luxury consumer goods, including alcohol beverages and a compulsory savings scheme. The savings scheme stipulated the purchase of government bonds to the value of five percent of that part of the salary in excess of \$100 a month.¹⁵⁵ This measure affected the upper 35 percent of Guianese salary and

¹⁵² Jagan, The West on Trial, 252.

¹⁵³ Great Britain, Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in British Guiana in February 1962, London: 1962. Col. No. 354. (The Wynn Parry Report 1962). p. 13.

¹⁵⁴ MLC, 31 January 1962.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.; Ibid., 13 July 1962. "The National Development Savings Levy Bill 1962". No. 10 of 1962 and The Daily Chronicle, 1 February 1962.

wage earning community and applied only to the excess over \$100 and not to the entire salary. Additionally there were some measures intended to curb the evasion and avoidance of taxes. As fiscal measures intended to encourage self-reliance, the budget was hailed as **"courageous and economically sound"** and as a **"serious attempt to get to grips with the formidable economic problems of the colony"**.¹⁵⁶ Significantly, the budget was not perceived by independent commentators as inimical to the expatriate companies in the sugar and bauxite industries.¹⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the Senior Chamber of Commerce composed of influential members of the UF, fearful of the communist designs of the PPP was outraged and attacked the budget as a communist devise to destroy big business.¹⁵⁸ The budget was described as a **"choke and rob"** initiative of the Government intended to violently and involuntarily remove money from the pockets of the population.¹⁵⁹ It was a **"Budget of Tears"** **"Slave Whip Budget"** the **"Tax Avalanche Will Crush Working Class"** **"Budget Exposes New Dangers Under Jagan."** The reports transformed a budget intended to curtail some of the profits of the commercial sector into a

¹⁵⁶ The Wynn Parry Report 1962, p. 15.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., paras., 45 and 124; the economic correspondent of The Sunday Times, 18 and 25 February 1962 or PNC economist and scholar Professor Rawle Farley, see his article, "Kaldor's Budget in Restropect, Reason and Unreason in a Developing Area: Reflections on the 1962 Budget in British Guiana" Inter-American Economic Affairs, CXXXIV, Summer 1962.

¹⁵⁸ The Guiana Graphic, 7 February 1962.

¹⁵⁹ The Daily Chronicle, 3 February 1962.

violently anti-working class budget.¹⁶⁰ The opposition, especially the UF claimed that it would frighten the working people and stir them to anger.¹⁶¹

The UF and big business encouraged employees in the commercial sector to defend their jobs and earnings by opposing the budget.¹⁶² On the other hand the PNC which controlled strategic sections of the urban work force encouraged the trade unions to oppose the budget.¹⁶³ One week after the budget was first presented, amidst calls for the government to resign, the Government unions announced a protest march.¹⁶⁴ The following day the CSA and FUGE, ignoring a long standing tradition of not striking, adopted strike action.¹⁶⁵ The TUC, now under the influence of the American anti-communist ICFTU and its regional arm, ORIT, called a general strike for 14 February.¹⁶⁶

On 9 February Jagan made a statement to the effect that

It had come to the knowledge of the government that violence is actually being planned on a general scale by certain elements acting for a minority group. In addition, it is understood that attempts against the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 4 February 1962.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² The Wynn Parry Report 1962, p. 35.

¹⁶³ The Daily Chronicle, 12 February 1962.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 14 February 1962.

¹⁶⁶ The Guiana Graphic, 15 February 1962.

Premier's life and the life of certain of his Ministers and supporters are contemplated. These acts of violence are intended to secure the overthrow of the legally elected government by force, and the tax proposals in the budget are being used as a screen for the general strike for Monday, February 12.¹⁶⁷

In the succeeding days assaults committed on PPP representatives became commonplace. Additionally, market vendors from the rural areas plying their commodities in the municipal markets were attacked and their goods destroyed or stolen.¹⁶⁸

Burnham, D'Aguiar and Richard Ishmael of the BGTUC and MPCA combined their forces in the city and brought the administration to a virtual standstill. On Thursday, 15 February, Jagan and the Minister of Home Affairs met the Governor and the Commander of British forces in the colony. Jagan pleaded for the immediate use of British troops on the streets of Georgetown but the Governor refused.¹⁶⁹ What is interesting about this refusal was the fact that the Governor already had in his possession a letter from the Commissioner of Police in which that officer had concluded that the **"only means of maintaining the Government without the loss of life will be the presence of a sufficient**

¹⁶⁷ **MLC**, 9 February 1962. Even though the TUC had voted for a general strike from 12 February, due to the intervention of Jagan the strike did not become effective until 14 February.

¹⁶⁸ **The Thunder**, 11 February 1962.

¹⁶⁹ **The Wynn Parry Report**, p. 42.

number of troops."¹⁷⁰

On the following day, "Black Friday" there was widespread arson and looting in the city which finally forced the Governor to order the involvement of a rifle company of British soldiers and to declare a state of emergency.¹⁷¹ A few days later reinforcement arrived from Jamaica.¹⁷² The troops quickly dispersed the unruly crowd but by the time order was restored four civilians and one superintendent of police had been killed and 41 civilians and 39 police injured. Destruction, damage and looting had affected 178 business places and resulted in insurance claims to the value of \$11,405,236.¹⁷³

This combination of the commercial sector, trade unions, the press, opposition political parties and the urban working class brought government business to a halt and severely embarrassed the PPP administration. It further divided the population. The urban Black working population now saw the government as an

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. It could be argued that the Governor was entitled to reject the advice of his Commissioner but in view of all the circumstances it was nevertheless unusual that he should have done so.

¹⁷¹ The British Guiana Official Gazette, (Extraordinary Issue), 16 February 1962.

¹⁷² The Guiana Graphic, 18 February 1962. For the full details of the movement of troops and sullies in this Colonial Emergency see, Whitehall press release, 19 October 1962 in The Daily Chronicle, 21 October 1962, The Wynn Parry Report 1962, Appendix X, "Statement of Troop Movements" and HCD, 655, Julian Amery, 17 March 1962. 66.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 17 and 24 February 1962 and The Wynn Parry Report 1962, p. 82. Appendix XI, Statement of Casualties and Damage sustained: Claims made on Insurance Companies; and Tear gas used.

Indian administration foisted upon them by the rural population, while the rural Indian saw the opposition as a lawless urban force bent on the destruction of a democratically elected government.

The PPP should have learnt two important lessons from the February disturbances. Firstly that they were almost totally alienated from the urban working people and secondly that the Georgetown commercial sector, the trade unions and the opposition were prepared to unite and bring the government down. What was more, given their February successes, it was inevitable that they would try again sooner rather than later.

The Washington Post, noting this increasing ethnic polarisation and the hardening of Black opposition to the PPP, advised HMG to "rethink its timetable about British Guiana's independence."¹⁷⁴ It did not think that Jagan would recapture "the support of the disaffected Africans." The New York Times was similarly pessimistic, contending that "Jagan would have been in exile but for British troops."¹⁷⁵ The New Statesman, devoted considerable space to the events of February 1962 and its assessment was more sober. After a careful analysis it concluded that

There seems little doubt that the unhappy events were the climax of a carefully prepared campaign by the two main opposition parties to overthrow the Jagan Government by

¹⁷⁴ The Washington Post, 19 February 1962.

¹⁷⁵ The New York Times, 21 February 1962.

massive resistance which was bound to lead to violence.¹⁷⁶

Jagan was determined to expose the role of the opposition in the disturbances and demanded the appointment of an impartial commission to investigate **"the events which resulted in death, robbery, arson, malicious damage to property and other offenses, and the severe economic loss which the country had suffered."**¹⁷⁷

HMG responded on 11 May by appointing Sir Harry Wynn Parry, Sir Edward Asafu-Adjaye of Ghana, Gopal Das Khosla of India and D.A. Skinner to a Commission which conducted sessions between 21 May and 28 June and reported two months later.¹⁷⁸ The Commissioners were satisfied that the budget was in no way destructive of the economic security of capital investment in the colony and concluded that,

the real origin of the riots lay in political rivalries and jealousies which had finally found expression in the criminal acts of a few groups of hooligans.¹⁷⁹

They were critical of the opposition which they found had exploited the budget to discredit the PPP. But, dissociating himself from the riots, Burnham pointed out that it was the riots of **Black Friday** which by forcing the Governor to call in the

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ HCD, 655, 13 March 1962. 1092-1093.

¹⁷⁸ The Wynn Parry Report was released on 1 October 1962 in the UK and on 3 October 1962 in British Guiana.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 50.

troops had **"saved Jagan from falling."**¹⁸⁰ Referring to the tactics adopted by the opposition as legitimate he argued that in politics one must always be prepared **"...to take advantage of your opponent's embarrassment."**¹⁸¹

Jagan was not happy with the report.¹⁸² Burnham on the other hand felt that the situation had proven the incompetence of the Jagan administration, and demanded its resignation.¹⁸³ Jagan no doubt found it difficult to live down the fact that his administration had been defended by British troops. As Burnham subsequently taunted, **"Had it not been for British troops Jagan would have been removed from power in February."**¹⁸⁴

The Budget which had been at the heart of the conflict was withdrawn and a new one substituted.¹⁸⁵ But the replacement, though lacking the components the opposition had found obnoxious in the former, was in its view no less objectionable. It was

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., Burnham's evidence before the Commission on 21 June. **The Daily Chronicle**, 22 June 1962.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Jagan, **The West on Trial**, 165.

¹⁸³ **The New Nation**, 7 October 1962.

¹⁸⁴ **MLC**, 4 April 1962. Dennis Healey was even more sarcastic demanding that the Secretary of State reconcile Jagan's call for troops with a statement made before the UN Trusteeship Committee when he said that there was a Colonial Office regime of terror and oppression in British Guiana and only the armed might of Britain acted as a deterrent to the proclamation of freedom in Guiana. **HCD.**, 654, 19 February 1962. 35-37. Another MP F.M.Bennet complained that HMG was employing British troops to prop up the Jagan administration. Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ **MLC**, 9 April 1962.

opposed this time in Parliament and, in an unexpected move by the opposition when Kendall the Deputy Speaker was in the chair and too many opposition members out of their seats, was defeated.¹⁸⁶ The nature of this defeat was so embarrassing that the demands for the resignation of the Government gained both momentum and stridency.

The disturbances provided HMG with an opportunity to postpone the constitutional conference, claiming that it was expedient to await the report of the commission of enquiry into the disturbances.¹⁸⁷ HMG also expressed concern that the parties did not seem sufficiently close to agreement on the details of an independence constitution to justify unwarranted urgency. Finally, a conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers was scheduled for the summer and HMG did not think that in the circumstances the constitutional conference could take precedence over a British Guiana financial conference scheduled for later in the year.¹⁸⁸ Neither Jagan nor Burnham accepted HMG's reasoning and protested the postponement.¹⁸⁹

However there was at least some ground for HMG's concern that the Guiana delegation could not agree on vital aspects of the independence package, not that this was perceived by the PPP as

¹⁸⁶ Amid strident calls for the resignation of the Government an interim budget was subsequently tabled. Ibid., 21 April 1962.

¹⁸⁷ HCD, 659, 2 May 1962. 199-200.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ The Guiana Graphic, 3 May 1962.

significant to the essential purpose of the conference which was fixing the date for independence. Since the January UN debate the opposition and especially the PNC had become less enthused with the idea of independence under Jagan, but neither could openly oppose independence for Guiana. They were however determined to utilise every means available to slow down and, if possible, prevent the transfer of power to Jagan.

In May, Jagan travelled to the UK and held discussions with Whitehall officials. These centred around a date for the independence conference and funding for development projects.¹⁹⁰ Whitehall could not have been happy to see Jagan since in addition to the fact that they were most reluctant to schedule a conference for Guiana, Jagan was once again receiving a bad press. **The Sunday Times**, reported that he was a communist, "**who represses his desire to establish a communist state in British Guiana.**"¹⁹¹ This was hardly surprising since it was earlier reported that President Kennedy had communicated his displeasure over a visit by Janet Jagan to Cuba in the wake of a trade agreement between Guiana and Cuba.¹⁹² Kennedy found Mrs Jagan's pledge of the colony's support for the Cuban revolution a serious challenge to American policy for Cuba.¹⁹³ But to the annoyance of the PPP the Constitutional Conference scheduled for

¹⁹⁰ HCD, 659, 8 May 1962. 199-200 and **The Daily Chronicle**, 12 May 1962.

¹⁹¹ **The Sunday Times**, 13 May 1962.

¹⁹² **Associated Press**, 17 February 1962.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

May was postponed tentatively until July and subsequently to September.¹⁹⁴

To signify their displeasure with the second postponement the party launched a picketing exercise outside the British Consulate in Guiana demanding immediate independence for the colony while Jagan protested the **"breach of promise"** to the UN.¹⁹⁵ Guiana's case was given a sympathetic hearing; the UN Special Committee on Colonialism adopted a resolution requesting the UK and British Guiana governments resume negotiations immediately to set a date in 1963 for independence.¹⁹⁶ While they did not vote against the resolution the American and Australian delegations did not support the proposals.¹⁹⁷

On the other hand, once the usual objections had been made, HMG's representative, Sir Hugh Foot, announced **"We are not against the principle of the resolution."**¹⁹⁸ He did, however, hint at the fact that there were second thoughts. Pointing to the recent difficulties experienced in the colony, he claimed **"His Majesty's Government wanted to give British Guiana the best possible start.... We know what we are about. We have had half a dozen**

¹⁹⁴ HCD, 659, 8 May 1962. 199-200 and 662, 3 July 1962. 28.

¹⁹⁵ United Nations Document, (UND), A/AC/109/84, 23 July 1962. p. 7 and UND, A/5446/Rev.1, pp. 275-276 and 315.

¹⁹⁶ GAOR, Annex, I, 1962. para., 69-84. See also UN General Assembly Resolution, 1810 (XVII) of 17 December 1963.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

conferences in six months dealing with such matters."¹⁹⁹ In spite of the assurances given by HMG there were two other Guianese petitioners in 1962. Both Andrew Jackson, trade unionist and PNC legislative councillor, and Brindley Benn, PPP Chairman and Minister of Natural Resources, while advancing conflicting cases for independence, succeeded in convincing the Committee that the Guiana^{situation} was grave enough to warrant a closer inspection. As a result the Committee appointed a special Sub-Committee **"to seek, together with the interested parties, the most suitable ways and means of enabling British Guiana to accede to independence without delay."**²⁰⁰ The Sub-Committee was prevented from sending a fact-finding mission to the colony on the grounds that it was not within the competence of Jagan to authorise a visit by such a mission.²⁰¹ Undaunted by HMG's response the Sub-Committee recommended that a team of constitutional experts be appointed by the Secretary General to assist the Guiana parties construct an acceptable independence constitution. Once again HMG frustrated the efforts of the UN Sub-Committee by announcing that an Independence conference would be convened in 1963 and that the efforts of the team of experts might present obstacles to the successful conclusion of that meeting.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ **United Nations Special Committee Report, UND, A/5446/Rev.1.**

²⁰¹ **Report of the United Nations Special Committee, UND, A/5800/ Rev.1, p. 255.**

²⁰² Ibid., p. 254.

However a London Correspondent predicted a further postponement of the independence talks. He argued that the Aden talks had exhausted the Secretary of State who was therefore unlikely to agree to the September Guiana talks.²⁰³ He also disclosed that the new Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Nigel Fisher, had been vehemently opposed to the PPP and was not likely to encourage the Guiana talks.²⁰⁴

But global affairs had decidedly taken a turn inimical to the fortunes of the PPP. In early September President Kennedy took a decisive step against Cuba, when deemed Cuba a serious threat to the Hemisphere and threatened a military strike if Soviet missiles, located on the island, were not dismantled. The American press was not slow to establish a link between Cuba and Guiana. One source suggested a similar move against Guiana when it made **"British Guiana Another Missile base for Russia."**²⁰⁵

Jagan nevertheless made the trip once again to London in September and pleaded the cause of the colony even though the implications of the Cuban missile crisis could not have been loss to him. He knew that HMG had been under much pressure to

²⁰³ Foreign Correspondent, Ken Montano, **The Daily Chronicle**, 2 September 1962.

²⁰⁴ Fisher's attitude was both hostile and aggressive and in previous debates had made little effort to conceal his contempt for the PPP. See for instance **HCD**, 621, 5 April 1960. 180-182 and 654, 19 March 1962. 35-37. In the first he criticised his Government's undertaking to grant independence to the colony and on the second he poured scorn on the leadership of the PPP government.

²⁰⁵ **The United States and World Report**, 17 September 1962.

withhold independence to the colony. It had been reported that Lord Home had been called in by President Kennedy earlier in the month and had agreed on the serious nature of the developments in Cuba and, **"had discussed ways and means of containing further communist expressions and subversions in the Caribbean area."**²⁰⁶ The press release had an ominous air and its implications had not been lost on the political parties in Guiana. Jagan was certain that American pressure would be sustained as the months progressed.²⁰⁷ But in spite of what must have been tremendous motivation to refuse HMG agreed that the talks would be held in October.²⁰⁸

The 1962 British Guiana Constitutional Conference

The constitutional conference was finally convened in London on the 23 October.²⁰⁹ Because of the inability of the parties to arrive at common ground HMG found the areas of disagreement sufficiently wide to permit it to renege on its 1960 Constitutional Conference commitment to discuss the mechanics of political independence. The conference was thereafter engaged

²⁰⁶ White House press release, 1 October 1962. Those present at the meeting were Lord Home, HMG Foreign Secretary, Sir David Ormsby Gore, HMG Ambassador to the US, Dean Rusk US Foreign Secretary and George Ball, Under Secretary of State.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Dr Jagan. 14 May 1987.

²⁰⁸ Whitehall press release, 21 September 1962.

²⁰⁹ The Guiana delegations were decided after a cordial Legislative debate at which it was decided that the PPP and PNC would each have three representatives and the UF two. The arrangement lent itself to a flexible interpretation since each party was also allowed a team of advisors. **MLC**, 16 October 1962. The result was that each party took four representatives and an advisor.

in protracted and contentious debate on proportional representation, new elections before independence and a reduction of the voting age. The opposition parties clung so desperately to their respective positions that the new demands became preconditions to independence.²¹⁰

The deliberations were characterised by acrimonious divisions among the three parties.²¹¹ D'Aguiar considered it absurd that HMG might conceivably consider granting independence to Guiana under a government that did not have majority support. He argued that Jagan was bent on the creation of a communist dictatorship in the colony and that at the least another election under a new system, proportional representation, was vital to produce a government with a real mandate from the people to lead the colony to independence.²¹² Burnham found it expedient to change position. He abandoned his previous position on independence and supported D'Aguiar. The PPP, he reasoned, with only 42 percent of the vote was not a legitimate government to lead the colony into independence. Another election, this time utilising proportional representation rather than the first-past-the-post system, would produce the credentials necessary for a government

²¹⁰ Sandys' response to criticism from MP. Royle that HMG had contributed to the failure of the conference in an effort to effect the fall of Jagan. Sandys protested that HMG had done its best to conclude a successful conference but that these efforts were frustrated by the Guiana parties. **HCD**. 669, 11 December 1962. 200-202.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, Secretary of State criticises the unrelenting acrimony which inhibited a successful resolution of issues discussed at the conference.

²¹² Great Britain, **British Guiana Independence Conference, 1962**. (London: 1962), Annex B. pp. 8-9.

to lead the colony to independence.²¹³

Jagan, chastened by the February experience and conscious that American opinion against him was strong enough to warrant HMG's reconsideration of the 1960 agreement, seemed disposed to make concessions. While rejecting proportional representation for the Legislative Assembly he was disposed to accept it for election to the Senate.²¹⁴ Members of the opposition were, however, confident that global considerations favoured them and rejected the offer. They insisted on new elections before independence using the new system of proportional representation.²¹⁵

There was little hope of compromise but the Secretary of State's threat to impose a solution was resisted by all parties.²¹⁶ Jagan further conceded new elections prior to independence, but Burnham, sensing that an election under the old system would no doubt produce the same result, would accept nothing less than proportional representation.²¹⁷ Jagan then suggested a PPP/PNC

²¹³ Ibid., 11-14.

²¹⁴ Jagan, The West on Trial, 272-273. Dennis Healey adverts to this development, HCD, 699, 11 December 1962. 201-202.

²¹⁵ Great Britain, British Guiana Independence Conference 1962, (London: 1962). p. 15.

²¹⁶ Ibid.; Duncan Sandys, HCD, 21 October 1966 and Ibid., 699, 11 December 1962. 200-202.

²¹⁷ This was subsequently denied by the Secretary of State who when so informed by Mr Dennis Healey, insisted that the PPP delegation had not made this concession. HCD, 699, 11 December 1962. 200-202. Earlier the Secretary of State had admitted that there were some concessions but that "in all cases they went so little towards the point of view of the other party that they did not offer any basis for a compromise solution."

coalition government which was also rejected by Burnham.²¹⁸ Two weeks on and recognising that there was no hope of breaching the PPP- PNC/UF impasse, Sandys announced that **"no substantial progress could be made until decisions were reached on three major issues"** and adjourned the conference to be reconvened in Guiana under the Governor.²¹⁹ No date was set for a new Conference in London, the Secretary of State making the very idea of another conference conditional on the opposing parties reaching agreement in the local talks with the Governor.²²⁰ No mention was made about independence and even if one assumed that HMG retained a commitment to Guiana's independence, the issue was nevertheless silently and conveniently shelved for the time being.²²¹

Jagan speaking at the UN, immediately after the London Conference, accused HMG of abandoning the principles of fair play but conceded that external pressures had, to a large extent, been responsible for the HMG turnabout.²²² This view was shared by the Special Committee which communicated its disappointment to HMG through its representative to the UN.²²³

²¹⁸ Ibid., and Jagan, The West on Trial, 272.

²¹⁹ British Guiana Independence Conference 1962, p. 4.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ HCD, 699, 11 December 1962. 202.

²²² The Daily Chronicle, 26 November 1962.

²²³ The Ghanaian representative accused HMG of withholding Independence, **"without any justifiable reason except that the Party in power is not to the liking of the British Government."** GAOR, 28 November 1962. para., 190.

Burnham also travelled to the UN, after the London Conference, but his discussions were of a different nature. Burnham was seeking support for the introduction of proportional representation to Guiana. While there he attributed the failure of the conference to PPP intransigence.²²⁴ But there were few indeed who still believed in Burnham's commitment to Guiana's independence under Jagan.

Burnham's position at the London conference and his subsequent tactics may also have been influenced by discussions he had with officials of the American State Department during May. Washington had been impressed with Burnham, finding him **"an intelligent, self-possessed, reasonable man, insisting quite firmly on his "socialism" and "neutralism", but stoutly anti-communist"**.²²⁵ One source revealed that Burnham had convinced State Department officials that he was the **"acceptable alternative"**, to Jagan which they were looking for.²²⁶ It was subsequently reported to President Kennedy that,

an independent British Guiana under Burnham (if Burnham will commit himself to a multi-racial policy) would cause us many fewer problems than an independent British Guiana under Jagan.²²⁷

Burnham undoubtedly drew comfort from the meeting and a more determined effort to oust the PPP followed.

²²⁴ Ibid., 7 March 1963.

²²⁵ Schlesinger, 668.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

Immediately on his return from the conference, Burnham launched a signature campaign to whip up greater enthusiasm and wider support for Proportional Representation.²²⁸ Subsequently the UF declared that it was supporting the campaign.²²⁹ When therefore the Governor met Jagan and Burnham neither leader seemed prepared for discussion. Burnham was preoccupied with his PR signature campaign and Jagan with renewed efforts to reunite the nationalist movement. Jagan was still optimistic about a renewed coalition with the PNC. He was still convinced that with a united approach they could triumph over the pressure exerted by the United States and the United Force. D'Aguiar, no less unenthusiastic, was out of the colony during much of the time.²³⁰

1963: Civil Strife in British Guiana

If 1962 had been a bad year for the colony, it had been a disaster for the government. It had witnessed the emergence of PNC/UF coalition, a widening of the rift between the PPP and the PNC, a further fracturing of the nationalist movement along rural-urban lines, the loss of government influence in Georgetown, the capital and seat of government, the disastrous February civil disobedience followed by the government's retreat from its budget proposals and capitulation to union demands for increases which the colony could not afford, and the successful exploitation of the government's failure to retain administrative

²²⁸ The New Nation, 24 November 1962 and The Daily Chronicle, 29 November 1962.

²²⁹ The Daily Chronicle, 9 February 1963.

²³⁰ HCD, 699, 13 December 1962. 104.

control during the February disturbances as excuse to discuss details rather than the substance of political independence.

If however the PPP harboured hopes of a better 1963 these hopes were certainly dashed when the urban coalition decided to oppose the government's Labour Relations Bill 1963 which was tabled on 25 March 1963.²³¹ The Bill aimed to "enlarge the area of freedom of the working class people" by extending

the rights of the working class of this country to organise themselves into trade unions of their own choosing, and to be recognised as such by employers.²³²

The Labour Relations Bill 1963 had its origin in the 1948 Enmore strike and the belief that the MPCA was an ineffectual union which had lost the respect and support of the sugar workers.²³³ After the 1962 strike in which the unions with strong urban membership had dislocated the Jagan administration, the PPP undertook a reexamination of its influence within the trade union movement. This decision was all the more pressing because it was claimed that the sugar workers had joined the strike against the PPP when the MPCA had declared itself on strike.²³⁴

²³¹ "The Labour Relations Bill 1963." The Official Gazette, 24 March 1963 and Legislative Paper, No. 13 of 1963; MLC, 27 March 1963.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Refer to Chapter Two, pp. 112-115.

²³⁴ In reality what had happened was that the SPA had decided to lock out its employees once the MPCA had decided on strike action. An interesting feature of this issue was the fact

In 1963 therefore the PPP reasoned that one way of regaining influence within the TUC was to address, once more, the jurisdictional dispute within the sugar industry. The Labour Relations Bill 1963 was their way of gaining recognition for the GIWU and PPP influence within the TUC.²³⁵

Not unexpectedly the PNC and the UF opposed the Bill in the Legislative Assembly and the MPCA and the BGTUC condemned it at street corner meetings.²³⁶ Given their success in the previous year, they no doubted welcomed another opportunity to confront the PPP administration. In the circumstances it was too much to expect them to pass up the opportunity this bill presented for testing the government's capacity to contain dissent, especially within the city. The TUC, which had been given time to study the provisions of the Bill, complained that it was insufficient and demanded an extension.²³⁷ The PPP saw this as an attempt to delay the passage of the Bill and rejected the request.²³⁸ The TUC summoned a specially convened congress and rejected the Bill.²³⁹ The Minister of Labour attempted to assure the TUC that the Bill did not, as was suggested, seek to give control of the

that the Booker Directorate claimed no quarrel with the Bill and its chief spokesperson had openly supported the Bill. See acrimonious debate between Sir Jock Campbell of Bookers and Kit Nascimento of the UF. The Daily Chronicle, 1 and 2 March 1963.

²³⁵ MLC, 17 April 1963.

²³⁶ Ibid., 16 April 1963.

²³⁷ The Daily Chronicle, 27 March 1963.

²³⁸ Ibid., 10 April 1963.

²³⁹ Ibid., 14 April 1963.

trade union to the government.²⁴⁰ The following day the Minister made a number of amendments as suggested by the organisation but at a specially convened congress the TUC once again rejected the Bill and balloted for strike action **"in defence of Trade Unions' rights."**²⁴¹ On the 19 April six unions immediately adopted strike action. Among these were the MPCA and PNC dominated unions, Transport Workers Union, National Union of Public Service Employees, General Workers Union, Rice Workers Union and the Clerical and Commercial Workers Union.²⁴² Since the PNC exerted much influence in several of these unions it was reasonable to suspect that the PNC supported their action. When therefore the UF offered immediate support for the striking threat, Jagan, sensing a repetition of the 1962 disturbance, postponed an overseas trip to have discussions with the TUC.²⁴³ The TUC entered into negotiations but insisted that the strike threat would not be withdrawn.²⁴⁴ The British TUC indicated its objections to the Bill and supported the strike threat.²⁴⁵ Two weeks of negotiations yielded little progress. The Governor met with the TUC but could effect no conciliation.²⁴⁶ A general strike was in progress and the troops were out on patrol and when

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 17 April 1963.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 19 April 1963.

²⁴² Ibid., 21 April 1963.

²⁴³ Ibid. and 7 May 1963.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 21 April 1963.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., Press release issued by Richard Ishmael, President of the TUC and the MPCA.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 9 May 1963.

the negotiations between the government and the TUC broke down completely a state of emergency was declared.²⁴⁷

Both the TUC and the PNC criticised the emergency and the use of troops.²⁴⁸ Burnham considered both the cowardly act of a frightened government.²⁴⁹ Once again the urban administration of the Government was dislocated and sugar workers locked out. Civil servants employed in the work of the Parliament were also on strike, and when the Government brought in non-striking civil servants to take notes the opposition walked out of the proceedings.

The Emergency proclamation passed on 9 May had a ten day duration and was due to expire on 19 May. The Government attempted to secure an extension on that evening but were outwitted by the opposition who succeeded in extending the debate beyond midnight thereby forcing the forfeiture of the Regulation.²⁵⁰ Jagan's embarrassment was now doubled. Not only did he have to rely on British troops to maintain order for the second year running but his government had been outwitted for the second time inside the legislature and he was forced to apply to the Governor for a renewal of the Emergency Regulations, a factor which did his administration no good. Opportunistic and perhaps callous, it

²⁴⁷ The Official Gazette (Extraordinary Supplement), 9 May 1963 and MLC, 10 May 1963.

²⁴⁸ The Daily Chronicle, 10 May 1963.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ MLC, 19 May 1963.

might have been, but Jagan's second defeat and his dependence on the Governor for the reinstatement of the Emergency Regulations considerably reduced his political stature and enhanced the popular standing of Burnham and the PNC. The Governor did not sign the new Order until 22 May a factor which considerably increased the uneasiness of the PPP administration.²⁵¹ But much worse was to come.

The strike lasted 80 days and affected every part of the economy. Foodstuffs and other essentials became scarce and had to be controlled.²⁵² There were sporadic outbursts of violence and as was now the custom the Jagans were stoned.²⁵³ The strikers indulged in shootings, looting, squattings and demonstrations of one sort or another.²⁵⁴ Inevitably the violence widened and country wide clashes between the supporters of the PNC/UF coalition and the PPP became commonplace. The opposition, enjoying almost total dominance in the city, was determined to bring down the Jagan government with its predominantly rural support. Tension was heightened when on 20 May during the course of the debate on the Labour Relations Bill, a PPP member accused of making an obscene gesture was reprimanded and ordered to

²⁵¹ The Official Gazette, (Extraordinary Supplement). 22 May 1963.

²⁵² HCD, 679, 18 June 1963. 38.

²⁵³ MLC, 4 April 1963. On the 12 June Jagan's bodyguards had reason to believe that the Premier's life was threatened and fired into a hostile crowd injuring at least four persons. The Secretary of State erroneously dated the incident as having taken place on 25 June. HCD, 680, 10 July 1963. 30.

²⁵⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 31 May 1963.

apologise to the Speaker.²⁵⁵ The PPP rather than tender an apology chose to prorogue the assembly.²⁵⁶ While this meant that a vote of no confidence could not be tabled against the government it also killed the much opposed Labour Relations Bill. The PPP did not attempt to reintroduce the Bill but the strike nevertheless continued for another 42 days during which period efforts to bring the government down intensified.

In the course of the discord, Minister of Home Affairs, Claude Christian fell ill and died while attending a PPP meeting at Freedom House. Rumours, as to the manner and or cause of his death abounded and his funeral became a compelling spectacle.²⁵⁷ The huge urban crowds once again harassed and assaulted the Jagans and other officials attending the funeral. The use of tear gas gave rise to the rumour that a child, trodden by mounted police, had been killed and there ensued another round of rioting and beatings of Indians in the streets of the city.²⁵⁸ Rumours of "an East Indian massacre" in the city influenced retaliatory reprisals in the rural areas. By 1 June a state of emergency was proclaimed in the Greater Georgetown area.²⁵⁹

Disgusted with the process of strikes, disorderly conduct and

²⁵⁵ MLC, 19 and 21 May 1963.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 28 May 1963.

²⁵⁷ The Daily Chronicle, 20 May 1963.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 1 June 1963.

²⁵⁹ The Official Gazette, (Extraordinary Supplement), 1 June 1961.

racial abuse, many persons of all ethnicity were determined to return to work.²⁶⁰ Fearing for the success for their efforts, which after all had not brought the Government down, the TUC engaged in a series of "sit-ins."²⁶¹ One such sit-in at the Parliament Buildings resulted in the physical assault of the Minister of Education, Senator Nunes, and a similar attempt on Cheddi Jagan.²⁶² Jagan's Security Guards fired at the crowd injuring at least four persons.²⁶³ When reports of this incident did the rounds of the city another wave of looting and racial assaults followed.²⁶⁴ The Army and Navy were called into action.²⁶⁵

On 25 June police were forced to use tear gas to disperse several illegal processions sponsored by the PNC and once again violence erupted across the city.²⁶⁶ Rural violence kept pace with urban atrocities and on 1 July, a Black child was murdered producing even greater acts of wanton depredations in the city.²⁶⁷ On 4 July there were 3 more murders in the rural areas with another

²⁶⁰ Bertram Collins, "The Civil Service of British Guiana in the General Strike of 1963." CQ, X (June 1964), pp. 6-7.

²⁶¹ The Daily Chronicle, 11 and 12 June 1963.

²⁶² Ibid. 13 June 1963 and Jagan, The West on Trial, 237-239.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 13 June 1963.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 26 June 1963.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 2 July 1963.

forty five persons injured.²⁶⁸ In the city there were more than 130 persons, mostly Indians, injured and 100, mostly Blacks, arrested.²⁶⁹

In early July the commercial sector agreed on back-to-work terms but the TUC retained the services of a British trade unionist, Robert Willis, who negotiated the end of the strike on 6 July.²⁷⁰ This strike, the longest in the history of the colony till then, severely damaged the reputation of the PPP. It demonstrated the resourcefulness and callousness of the opposition and their determination to bring the government down, but it also exposed the government's administrative inadequacies and an incapacity to properly defend itself against the opposition. Perhaps most important of all, it demonstrated an almost total loss of influence and authority at the administrative centre, Georgetown, without which the PPP could never hope to administer the colony effectively. Many supporters who deplored the conduct of the opposition were nevertheless dismayed by the impotence of the PPP.²⁷¹

A further important feature of the disturbance was the extent of the division which had been created between the two major ethnic

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 5 July 1963.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 5 July 1963.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 19 June and 7 July 1963.

²⁷¹ Interview with Ram Karran, founder member of the PPP and a Minister in both the 1957 and 1961 PPP governments. 22 July 1988. Ram Karran, the leader of the 1947 Transport and Harbours strike which resulted in the recall of Col. Teare had served in the Legislative Council until 1984 when he resigned.

groups in the colony. Their differences now seemed irreconcilable and ethnic violence, though of a sporadic nature, remained a feature of the daily life of the colony.

In the midst of the unrest the Under-Secretary of State, Nigel Fisher, had visited the colony in May and his report must have emphasised the urgency of the local situation for the Secretary of State considered the situation serious enough to visit one month later.²⁷² He denied rumours that he was "going out with any ready made solutions," but insisted that no thought had been given to suspending the Guiana constitution.²⁷³ He spent his time in discussions with nearly every influential group in the colony. He saw little sign of ethnic cooperation and his discussions could not have filled him with much hope for the colony. He was nevertheless convinced that economic development and constitutional advance could only be assured if ethnic conflict was reduced, and he decided that a coalition across ethnic lines was preferred to partitioning.²⁷⁴ But Burnham was

²⁷² The Under Secretary of State was visiting in the Caribbean on other business but was requested to make a hurried visit to the colony and report on the situation. HCD., 678, 28 May 1963. 105. A few weeks later Sandys reported on the worsening situation in the colony. Ibid., 679, 18 June 1963. 38.

²⁷³ Whitehall press release, The Daily Chronicle, 20 June 1963. HMG's position was reiterated by Secretary of State, on the eve of his departure for the colony. HCD, 680, 2 July 1963. 30. */ Duncan Sandys,*

²⁷⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 12 July 1963. Partitioning had emerged as a controversial issue in the independence debate during the election campaign when Sydney King, then the editor of the PNC's New Nation, had supported "Vigilance's" argument that Blacks would not survive in an independent state under the PPP. The PNC had sacked King for being too closely associated with the idea but King retained considerable influence in the rural Black community and, particularly after the PPP's election victory celebrations in the city, his influence had spread and

not keen on a coalition at that juncture and suggested a three party national front government which he knew was unacceptable to the PPP.²⁷⁵ Additionally the PPP sought a lasting merger while the PNC proposed only a temporary merger until the new elections were held before independence.²⁷⁶

Sandys did not think the talks between the PNC and the PPP would produce immediate results and declined to set a deadline for them insisting that a greater degree of agreement among the leaders had become a prerequisite for a peaceful settlement in the colony.²⁷⁷ His visit had inclined him to fear both communism and racial politics in the colony and while he was reluctant to pressure the leaders into accord, he felt "that it is now generally accepted that the British Government will have to settle the outstanding issues on their own authority: and that is what we propose to do."²⁷⁸ HMG, he declared, would however prefer that the local leaders sort out the problems among themselves.²⁷⁹

The Secretary of State admitted that Washington had expressed

the idea of partitioning the colony had become a serious consideration among a section of the Black community.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 14 and 21 July 1963.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 21 July 1963.

²⁷⁷ Sandys report on his visit to the colony. HCD, 681, 17 July 1963. 521-531.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 527.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 529.

concern about the political situation in the colony but revealed that the Americans understood that it was up to HMG to "sort it out as best we can in our own way."²⁸⁰ Sandys rejected PPP calls for immediate independence but during his visit conceded that independence talks were likely to be held in October 1963.²⁸¹ This announcement in the press release seemed to be reinforcing an earlier release by the UK representative to the UN who announced that "the UK policy remains to bring British Guiana to independence at the earliest possible date."²⁸² But the US envoy to Trinidad and Tobago in a discussion on Guiana revealed that the, "US was not interested in aiding another Castro."²⁸³ A few weeks later the head of USAID announced that Washington had decided against extending economic aid to British Guiana "because no useful purpose would be served."²⁸⁴ He doubted whether US aid would have any influence on the Jagans and other PPP leaders.²⁸⁵ But the former Governor of Guiana, Sir Ralph Grey, who had served in the colony between 1959 and 1963, attacked both the UK and US handling of the Guiana situation in general and Cheddi Jagan in particular. He charged that HMG had allowed American influence to impinge on British policy in Guiana with increasingly

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 17 July 1963.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 18 July 1963.

²⁸² UK Representative responding to the UN press release. Ibid., 20 June 1963.

²⁸³ The Trinidad Guardian, 2 September 1963.

²⁸⁴ Press release of Mr Donald Bell, Director of USAID, Reuter, 19 September 1963.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

disastrous consequences."²⁸⁶ Grey's outburst was both unusual and interesting. It was no doubt a breach of protocol but it nevertheless indicated the level of concern within some quarters over HMG's policies in the colony.

The 1963 British Guiana Constitutional Conference

The 1963 Constitutional conference was convened in London on 22 October. But these talks were as futile as all the others held before. Indeed before leaving for London, Burnham had invited both Jagan and D'Aguiar to a "little summit" before the talks in London.²⁸⁷ He hoped to narrow the areas of disagreement but the UF declined feeling there was little to be achieved from such talks.²⁸⁸ Burnham expressed little hope for a successful conference.²⁸⁹ In spite of the failure of the little summit Jagan and Burnham held preliminary talks in London but these did not bring the two parties any closer to a compromise.²⁹⁰

On learning that the areas of disagreement had still not been narrowed the Secretary of State embarked on personal

²⁸⁶ An interesting feature of this letter was the fact that it would have been written while Grey was on his way from Guiana to the Bahamas to assume the duties of Governor and Commander-in-Chief. The Scotsman, 25 September 1963.

²⁸⁷ Forbes Burnham to General Secretary, PPP. 11 October 1963 and Forbes Burnham to Leader, UF. 11 October 1963. NAG.

²⁸⁸ The Daily Chronicle, 12 October 1963.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 18 October 1963.

consultations with each party.²⁹¹ The futility of the situation was now apparent to all and no doubt pleasing to both Burnham and D'Aguiar who were now more convinced than ever that affairs did not favour the PPP. Jagan was no doubt similarly convinced for it was inconceivable that his position could be enhanced if he returned to the colony without independence. Independence alone would in his opinion reduce the level of restiveness in the colony and make stable PPP administration possible. Commending the British "high sense of fair play and justice," taking independence for granted and confident that in all probability all the rulings would not go against him, he therefore suggested that the Secretary of State arbitrate in the three contentious issues.²⁹² D'Aguiar immediately acquiesced but Burnham was hesitant, claiming that the solution could not be beyond the capacity of the Guianese leaders; threatened with another adjournment, he agreed.²⁹³ In a joint statement the three regretted,

to have to report to you that we have not succeeded in reaching agreement; and we have reluctantly come to the conclusion that there is no prospect of an agreed solution. Another adjournment of the conference for further discussion between ourselves would therefore serve no useful purpose and would result only in

²⁹¹ Ibid., 25 October 1963.

²⁹² Premier, British Guiana to Prime Minister, United Kingdom, 7 November 1963. (Private; PPP Archives). See Brindley Benn, Chairman, PPP and member of the Government delegation for a similar comment, The Daily Chronicle, 18 November 1964.

²⁹³ PNC Overseas Newsletter, I, XVII, November 1963.

further delaying British Guiana's independence and in continued uncertainty in the country.

In these circumstances we are agreed to ask the British Government to settle on their authority all outstanding constitutional issues, and we undertake to accept their decisions.²⁹⁴

On the last day of October 1963 the Secretary of State announced HMG's decision. Not only did he rule in every instance against the PPP but the date of independence was once again withheld. In his ruling Sandys

... concluded that it must be our deliberate aim to stimulate a radical change in the present pattern of racial alignments. It was therefore my duty to choose the electoral system which would be most likely to encourage inter-party coalitions and multi-party groupings and which would make it easy for new parties to form. Having thus defined the objective, the answer was clear, British Guiana must change over to a system of proportional representation....²⁹⁵

He did not think that a case had been made out for the lowering of the voting age to eighteen and therefore ruled against it but since the voting system,

is to be changed, it is clearly right that fresh

²⁹⁴ Great Britain, British Guiana Conference 1963, (London: 1963), Cmd. 2203. p. 4.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., Appendix A. p. 8.

elections under the new system should be held before independence. Preparations for them should be put in hand as soon as practicable.²⁹⁶

Reaction to the 1963 Sandys' Decision

Dr Jagan was devastated. The confidence he had placed in the Secretary of State had been betrayed. He rejected the British decision. In retrospect much later Jagan confessed

I have no doubt that the British Government would have imposed its will in any event. And its will, in accordance with the wishes of the U.S. government, was to unseat us and install the opposition in power either by suspending the constitution or by calling for a referendum on proportional representation.²⁹⁷

The British press and political commentators were sceptical of the validity of the Secretary of State's premises for the change to proportional representation, fearing rather that the ethnic voting and communal conflict had been licensed by Sandys' solution.²⁹⁸ They condemned the Guiana delegation for its failure to compromise and poured scorn on the PPP for its reluctance to accept HMG's decision after having attached their signature to the consenting document.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Jagan, The West on Trial, 280.

²⁹⁸ See particularly issues of The Guardian, The Scotsman and The Economist, between 3 and 11 July 1963.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

While there was some reservations about the Sandys solution there was nevertheless a broad consensus across the political spectrum that the behaviour of the Guiana delegations and developments in the colony had forced the Secretary of State to act as he did. This was reflected in the comments of the British press and political commentators. The Sunday Observer supported the Sandys solution, arguing that to confirm the trend of party politics along racial lines in the colony as it proceeded to independence "would have been disastrous."³⁰⁰ Rita Hinden, Fabian colonial expert and at the time editor of the Socialist Commentary, felt that it was difficult to think of any way of protecting domestic rights "other than what the British Government has now proposed."³⁰¹ Nigel Fisher, in a speech to the Tory group at Cambridge University, argued that in delaying independence for Guiana HMG would be saddled with "worry, trouble and expense," but the old system had to be changed because it had not worked. In his opinion, "anything is better than the steady deteriorating drift towards disaster and racial civil war which has been the history of British Guiana in the last few years."³⁰² Within the Caribbean Eric Williams, aggrieved at the failure of Caribbean initiatives, supported the Sandys solution.³⁰³

Tom McKitterick, writing in the London Economist, alone described the solution accurately, as

³⁰⁰ The Scotsman, 3 and 4 November 1963.

³⁰¹ Letter to The Editor, The Times, 7 November 1963.

³⁰² The Daily Chronicle, 9 November 1963.

³⁰³ The Trinidad Guardian, 27 November 1963.

a breach of faith, since the leaders had accepted intervention in the belief that he (Sandys) would attempt to reconcile the differences and not delay independence of the country. He met neither of these conditions.³⁰⁴

He observed with more than passing insight that the policy of obstruction and sometimes of violence followed by certain opposition groups in the last two years has secured for them a vastly more favourable solution than could have been obtained had the forms of democracy been observed.³⁰⁵

The Observer noted that the Sandys solution had "in effect loaded the dice against Dr Jagan."³⁰⁶ The independent Scotsman, commented that it was "certainly true that the Americans have made no secret of their antipathy to Dr Jagan and his Marxist views...their wishes must certainly have been in Mr Sandys mind when he made his decision."³⁰⁷ H.Hassal, writing in the Manchester Guardian, suspected that the solution was motivated by

the hatred of Jagan, the fear of any brand of socialism and the safeguarding of the hemisphere economically for Standard Oil, International Telephone, the United Fruit Company and others, and

³⁰⁴ The Economist, December 1963.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ The Observer, 22 November 1963.

³⁰⁷ The Scotsman, 25 November 1963.

not for much flaunted and oft abused democracy.³⁰⁸

The Labour Party was also unhappy with the way in which the conference had ended. The party argued that the opposition could have been protected by legal restraints built into the constitution.³⁰⁹ Harold Wilson subsequently admitted that,

You are no doubt aware that the Labour Party spokesmen strongly criticised the Colonial Secretary's decision to impose Proportional Representation in British Guiana. We have, therefore, considerable sympathy ... and shall be raising the matter in the House of Commons.³¹⁰

Later, he explained to a private citizen that "we have been extremely critical of the extreme form of proportional representation which the Colonial Secretary has decided to impose."³¹¹

Anthony Greenwood, Labour's spokesman for colonial affairs, disclosed

we have condemned Duncan Sandys' decision to impose proportional representation in British Guiana and we expect to express that position when the Order-in-

³⁰⁸ The Manchester Guardian, 25 November 1963.

³⁰⁹ H.Wilson to Secretary, Progressive Youth Organisation, 12 December 1963. (PPP Archives).

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ H.Wilson to D.Nath, 2 January 1964. (PPP Archives).

Council giving effect to the decision comes up for debate in the next week or so.³¹²

Harold Wilson labelled the change in electoral form "a fiddled constitutional arrangement,"³¹³ while Bottomley claimed it as one

riddled with disadvantages and which is quite unknown in any other Commonwealth country.... Those who support him (Sandys) have done so not because they think this will reduce racialism but because they think it will put someone in power whom they prefer to Dr Jagan.³¹⁴

Jock Campbell, the Chairman of the Booker Group of companies, remonstrated with the Secretary of State, dubbing the solution, "An experiment in colonial anarchy." He argued the delay in granting independence, "prolongs the existing irresponsibility."³¹⁵ Robert Willis, who while supervising the end of strike negotiations had been alarmed at the role of American trade unions in the colony and had won the enmity of the leader of the local TUC for his observations, warned that the solution would cause, "coalitions, racial animosity and violence."³¹⁶

³¹² A.W.T.Greenwood to Leader, PPP, 16 April 1964. (PPP Archives)

³¹³ HCD, 16 June 1964.

³¹⁴ Ibid., Arthur Bottomley, *Labour's Foreign Affairs Spokesman*.

³¹⁵ The Daily Chronicle, 6 November 1963.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 2 December 1963.

There was no disguising the PPP's intention to oppose the Sandys Plan. It admonished its supporters:

The Sandys Plan must be stopped and party members and supporters must recognise that in order to stop the Sandys Plan they will have to make sacrifices on a scale and to a degree never required of them before. Whatever the effort and whatever the sacrifices, the Sandys PLAN MUST BE STOPPED.³¹⁷

This effort to reverse the decisions of the 1963 conference was prosecuted at two levels. The first was domestic and political. There was an internal mobilisation drive to get the entire population to understand that the plan brooked only evil for the future of the colony. Additionally, the PPP attempted to reinvigorate the campaign for political independence and to secure a political alliance with the PNC.

The second level at which opposition to the Sandys solution was conducted was that of an international effort which lobbied international support for the reversal of the Sandys plan. Mrs. Jagan pleaded Guiana's case before the sympathetic Special Committee on Colonialism which promised to consider the situation.³¹⁸ This performance was followed up by the PPP lobbyist, Felix Cummings, who pleaded for UN intervention to

³¹⁷ This speech was subsequently published in Pamphlet form, "Cheddi Jagan Speaks at Freedom Rally; 9 February 1964" (Georgetown: nd.).

³¹⁸ GAOR, 1964-1965, 6 May 1964. 231-233.

postpone the proportional representation election in Guiana.³¹⁹

The Guiana case was duly considered, resulting in an eleven member resolution calling on HMG, "to fix without delay the date for the Independence of British Guiana."³²⁰ Close contact with the Labour Party resulted in Wilson's suggesting to HMG that a Commonwealth mission be despatched to the colony.³²¹ The Observer found merit in the proposal since as it concluded there was now urgent need for new thinking on Guiana.³²²

With this purpose uppermost in their minds, the Minister of Communication, Gladstone Wilson, was despatched to the Malawi independence celebrations. There, with the assistance of the Ghanaian delegates, frantic efforts were made to solidify African support for the PPP.³²³ This move bore fruit later at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in July 1964 where Dr Williams of Trinidad and Tobago, with the assistance of the Africans, unveiled a new plan to have the Sandys plan shelved.³²⁴ The Williams plan to have the colony placed under the administration of the UN was supported but many were concerned at the consequences of such a strategy for other colonies where

³¹⁹ Ibid., 9 June 1964. 233-235.

³²⁰ Ibid., 245.

³²¹ HCD, 697, 30 June 1964. 1136-1137 and 699, 21 July 1964. 252.

³²² The Observer, 21 June 1964.

³²³ The Daily Chronicle, 30 June 1964.

³²⁴ Prime Minister, Trinidad and Tobago to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 7 July 1964. A Proposal for the Accession of British Guiana to Independence. See also, The Daily Chronicle, 11 July 1964 and The Daily Mail, 8 July 1964.

there were political problems, especially in what HMG still preferred to describe as the plural societies.³²⁵ But even though they were also persuaded that PR in Guiana would create another Cyprus, they could not agree on a feasible solution and so decided to permit HMG to proceed as planned.³²⁶

The media had expected much of the Commonwealth Prime Minister's conference and was disappointed with the outcome. The Financial Times, for instance, lamented the failure of Eric Williams at the conference and concluded that the "outlook was bleak for the colony."³²⁷ Janet Jagan once again appeared before the UN Special Committee of Colonialism where she condemned the US for influencing HMG to withhold independence from British Guiana. She pleaded for support,

to hold back the heavy hand of uneven justice from the British Guiana Government before it was too late to stop the violence and hate unleashed in that unhappy land by the abridgement of the constitution of 1960.³²⁸

³²⁵ Great Britain, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, London 1964, Final Communique. (London: 1964) Cmd, 1836. p. 5.

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

³²⁷ The Financial Times, 20 July 1964. Apparently the Secretary of State was also frustrated and in utter despair subsequently complained that if the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting had failed he was not optimistic that any other initiative would succeed. HCD, 699, 21 July 1964. 252-262. See, The Daily Mirror, 8 July 1964 for a typical media response.

³²⁸ GAOR, Annex, No. 8, Part 1. p. 231.

The 1964 Civil War in British Guiana

Frustrated by the frequent rejections he had been receiving from the PNC and conscious of the need to demonstrate the extent of popular support against the Sandys solution Jagan reverted to the GIWU. In 1963 every effort had been made to demonstrate the true strength of the union but the attempt was frustrated by the TUC strike. A new initiative was now mounted.

In February 1964 a dispute at Plantation Enmore resulted in the usual show of sugar worker militancy.³²⁹ However when management agreed to discuss the grievance, the workers refused to be represented by the MPCA.³³⁰ When the management declined discussions with the GIWU the workers adopted strike action. Within a short while all sugar estates were involved.³³¹ But because the GIWU which supported the strike was not affiliated to the BGTUC the strike did not receive the support of the BGTUC so the sugar producers felt justified in breaking the strike. They therefore employed Black urban workers to break the strike on the East and West coast of Demerara.³³²

Strike breakers have always been unpopular but in the 1964 sugar strike they were more unpopular than ever. For whatever the industrial motives of the strike action the political implications were obvious. Additionally, the violence of the

³²⁹ The Daily Chronicle, 22 February 1964.

³³⁰ Ibid., 24 February 1964.

³³¹ Ibid., 26 February 1964.

³³² Ibid., 5 March 1964.

year before had not abated nor had the rancour felt for the urban Blacks who had opposed and for two years humiliated the PPP government. The inevitable clashes between the two antagonistic ethnic groups rapidly deteriorated into violent conflict in which threats, intimidation, arson, physical assaults, bombings and murder increasing became the significant feature.³³³ The MPCA which had the year before protested the use of troops to maintain peace in the colony now demanded that they be used to patrol the sugar belt and in the defence of the strike breakers.³³⁴

On March 6 a tractor operator drove his vehicle into a crowd of picketing women, killing one and injuring several others.³³⁵ The police, in an attempt to disperse the angry crowd gathered to protest this assumed "management decision", was forced to use teargas and ethnic violence escalated across the coastlands.

³³³ Ibid., 6 March 1964.

³³⁴ Ibid., 5 April 1964.

³³⁵ Ibid., 7 March 1964

ACTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED IN 1964³³⁶

Month	Killed	Injured
January	1	—
February	1	4
March	5	84
April	8	112
May	17	250
June	30	162
July	74	166
Total	136	778

The Minister of Home Affairs, humiliated by her impotence, resigned in frustration and anger while levelling grave charges against the partiality of the police force in the mining area and the slothfulness of the British troops who seemed to have taken an inordinately long time to arrive in the affected area.³³⁷ Two days later the Governor acceded to Jagan's request for the declaration of a state of emergency.³³⁸

Consequent on the resignation of the Minister of Home Affairs, the Governor now assumed responsibilities for that ministry, a decision which indicated an official retrenchment of the government's authority but which the Governor was empowered to

³³⁶ Ibid., Compiled from various news items over the period.

³³⁷ The Daily Chronicle, 2 June 1964.

³³⁸ The Official Gazette, (Extraordinary Supplement). 4 June 1964.

do in the case of an emergency.³³⁹

The overall toll was very high. About 2668 families or fifteen thousand persons had to be resettled in mono-ethnic communities with about 1342 of them becoming unemployed. In excess of 1400 houses were destroyed, 176 persons were killed and 920 injured. The financial cost of the damage was estimated at around \$4.300,000.³⁴⁰

For nationalist politicians, the involvement of the United States, whether directly through the exertion of its influence on HMG by the President and the State Department or the covert activities of the CIA and the AFL-CIO, was beyond doubt. In 1953, for instance, the PPP had been so convinced of this involvement that they called for a boycott of Coca Cola.³⁴¹ In subsequent years similar charges of interference were levelled internally, by Guianese politicians and externally, by journalists and other concerned persons, to the effect that the US had exercised its influence to delay the grant of independence until the PPP had been removed from office. While the official records are still unavailable, there is a considerable body of secondary source material supportive of that view.³⁴² The main

³³⁹ Ibid., 14 June 1964.

³⁴⁰ HCD, 699, 28 July 1964. 253.

³⁴¹ The Thunder, 18 October 1964.

³⁴² Serafino Romualdi, Peasants and Peons Recollections of A Labour Ambassador in Latin America, (New York: 1967); Philip Agee, Inside the Company; CIA Diary, (Harmonsworth: 1975); Fred Hirsch, An Analysis of Our AFL-CIO Role in Latin America or Under the Covers with the CIA, (San Jose: 1974); Arthur Schlesinger,

charges in 1959-60 were that the United States Information Service, departing from its usual practice of non-involvement, showed its films depicting the evils of Castroism at street corner meetings of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade in the full knowledge that the organisation was partial to the UF and that its sole purpose for being in the colony was to support the election campaign of the UF and to harass the PPP. Dr Fred Swartz, of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, confessed to this assistance and to an expenditure of \$76, 000 (US) in support of the UF. Both were undoubtedly questionable activities but there was nothing to suggest that the State Department had issued any directive of censure.³⁴³

This interference was intensified after the 1960 Constitutional conference when through the AIFLD^{*}, ICFTU^{*} and ORIT^{*}, worker discontent was fermented and strikes aimed at bringing down the democratically-elected PPP government were funded. These activities were supervised by Serafino Romualdi, AIFLD Director, Gerald O'Keefe, a CIA operative who carried out his activities through the Retail Clerks International Association, William McCabe, inter-American representative of the AFL-CIO, Ben Segal, Education Director of AIFLD and others including J. Philpot,

A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in The White House, (Boston: 1965); Ronald Radosh, American Labour and the United States Foreign Policy, (New York: 1969); William Blum, The CIA: A Forgotten History, (London: 1986); Richard J. Walton, Cold War and Counterrevolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy, (New York: 1972), and Richard Barnet, Intervention and Revolution, (New York: 1968).

³⁴³ Henfrey, 65; Barnet, p. 280 and Cheddi Jagan to President John F. Kennedy, 16 April 1963. (Archives of the PPP).

Ernest Lee, Morris Paladino, William Doherty, Wallace Legge, Jack Bernal, Rene Lioeanie, Pat Terril and Andrew McCellan. These men were constantly on visit throughout the period of civil strife and subsequently disclosures confirmed their involvement.³⁴⁴ In December 1964 when the Jagan administration attempted to restrict the movement of this frequent traffic of US trade unionists his efforts were frustrated by the Governor. The Governor's intervention was unusual enough to occasion the belief that even he had been instructed to act against his Premier.³⁴⁵

Finally, the State Department also exerted considerable influence on HMG to the extent that the latter, even though committed to independence for Guiana, was forced to delay that promise and participate in a scheme whose aim was to remove the PPP from office.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Writers such as Barnet, Agee, Romualdi, Blum, Meisler and Lens have all described, in varying degrees, of details the extent and nature of the programme of covert activity conducted by the CIA through the trade union movement both American and Guianese. Official confirmation is available though not on an extensive scale in Survey of the Alliance for Progress: Labour Policies and Programs, Staff Report of the US senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on American Republics Affairs, 15 July 1968 and Paul Jacobs, "American Unions and the CIA" Memorandum, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 2 August 1967. Finally, the problem was discussed in the Commons, HCD, 727, 4 May 1966, See contributions of Julius Silverman, Leslie Hale, Michael Foot, Jennie Lee, Joan Vickers, Fenner Brockway, Arthur Bottomley, Michael Foot and Stanley Orme. 1763-1823.

³⁴⁵ The Thunder, 27 December 1963 and The Daily Chronicle, 29 December 1964.

³⁴⁶ Schlesinger, p. 668; Cohen, p. 204, Pearson, 22 March 1964; The Sunday Times, 16 and 23 April 1967. HCD, 694, 27 April 1964. Ian Mcleod, 106-110.

British susceptibility to US influence after World War II derives, in the first instance from the declining influence of Britain in world affairs and secondly from British indebtedness to the US as a consequence of the American lend lease programme and subsequently, the Marshall Plan. But there was also a coincidence of interest in anti-Communism as a consequence of political developments in Eastern Europe, Berlin, Korea, the Congo, Kenya, Malaya, Laos, Cyprus and Cuba. The Conservatives had a political commitment to contain the spread of communism within the British Empire but, as a senior partner of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Britain also had a corresponding commitment, on a global scale, to her allies.³⁴⁷

Alternative British governments could and did not disengage themselves from this global commitment. The British Labour Party, for instance, was as committed to the containment of international communism as were the Conservatives. Labour, which in the immediate post-war years inspired nationalist colonial politics, was also at the centre of the international jurisdictional dispute between the old international trade union organisation, World Federation of Trade Unions, WFTU, which had, allegedly, been taken over by the Communists and the new international trade union organisation, the International

³⁴⁷ Prime Minister Macmillan on Anglo-American relations, The Christian Science Monitor, 14 February 1961; The New York Times, 30 May 1961; Harold Macmillan, Riding the Storm, 1956-1959, (London: 1971). pp. 249-259 and Harold Wilson, The Labour Government, 1964-1970, (London: 1971), pp. 45-51. For an American assessment of this commitment see, John F. Kennedy, "The Goal of An Atlantic Partnership" Independence Hall, Philadelphia, 4 July 1962. Department of State Bulletin, 23 July 1962.

Confederation of Free Trade Unions, ICFTU, launched in opposition to the Communist dominated WFTU and totally under the influence of the British Trade Union Congress and the American State Department. This involvement impaired the objectivity of the Labour Party and undermined its ability, once in office, to resist pressure from Washington for moderate political regimes in the British Caribbean.³⁴⁸ In the circumstances of the mid 1960s, Labour, like the Conservatives, cooperated with American anti-communist initiatives however extreme or precipitate in the region.³⁴⁹

One seldom remarked feature of this pressure was the frequency with which the two administrations consulted each other on international events. From the accession of President Kennedy, the administrations held high level talks at least twice yearly, while the US Foreign Secretary met with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth and Colonial Affairs even more frequently.³⁵⁰ At a lower level but just as important were

³⁴⁸ See the revealing entry of 31 May 1963 in which Walker, having criticised American foreign relations particularly in Latin America and argued for the independence of British Foreign policy, nevertheless admits that "We would not want to stand on rights and views that would endanger the alliance" and concludes that they were prepared to recognise America's paramount interests in Latin America, even where they thought them wrong. Robert Pearce, Patrick Gordon Walker, Political Diaries; 1932-1971, (London: 1991). pp. 290-292 and Lyttelton, pp. 428-430.

³⁴⁹ The New York Times, 31 October 1964.

³⁵⁰ In 1961-62 alone there were seven meetings. In 1961 there were Kennedy-Macmillan consultations on 7 March in Florida, 8 April in Washington, 7 September in Massachusetts, and 6 December in Bermuda. In 1962 there were Anglo-American consultations on 5 April in Washington, 4 August in Newport and 3 December in Nassau.

the meetings between HMG ambassadorial delegations to Washington and New York which took place weekly with sometimes daily briefings with counterparts in the State Department and at the United Nations. The frequency of these consultations ensured that the respective governments were aware of each other's thinking on critical issues as they evolved. They also considerably reduced the margin for unilateral action on the part of either, particularly on the part of HMG, and produced a uniformity of policy position and administrative response on important issues during a particularly sensitive period in international affairs. While it was very possible for HMG to resist the intrusion of American influence in what was so obviously an internal matter, the predisposition of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in the post-Suez period to restore and consolidate Anglo-American relations, the very fact that the Caribbean was historically a sensitive security American area of concern and the further fact that Guiana, in which there was substantial American capital investment in strategic mineral industry, was located in the Caribbean region which Castro had promoted to the centre of world affairs HMG found it increasingly difficult to resist American pressure.³⁵¹ In his autobiography

³⁵¹ Macmillan's concern with improving the Anglo-American relationship was illustrated repeatedly by Alister Horne, Macmillan, 1957-1986, (London: 1989). "Repairing the Fences between British and America that Suez had Broken" pp. 21-27; "Mending the Fences" pp. 30-59 and "A Very Special Relationship, 1960-1961" pp. 273-308. Macmillan himself is no less expansive in his treatment of the relationship. See Harold Macmillan, Riding the Storm, 1956-1959, (London: 1971), "The Anglo-American Schism" pp. 89-179; "Aftermath of Suez" pp. 206-239 and "A New Strategy" pp. 240-269. Macmillan confessed that, "The most urgent and at the same time the most delicate, task which confronted me on becoming Prime Minister was to repair and eventually to restore our old relationship with Washington" p.

Maudling indicated that the virtual collapse of the British economy after 1960 and HMG's increasing reliance on the Washington controlled IMF to fund domestic recovery considerably weakened their negotiating position in the frequent consultations with the American administration.³⁵² The UK administration therefore cooperated with them.

To fully appreciate the circumstances which influenced the State Department, it is necessary to remember that the US, since 1950, was the leading exponent of the Cold War, aimed at containing the spread of communism beyond Eastern Europe. The American administration was particularly sensitive to the possible spread of communism into its Caribbean and Latin American spheres of influence.³⁵³ Secondly, the Washington administration was determined enough about its anti-communist commitment to have facilitated the overthrow of the suspected leftist regimes of Dr Mohammed Mossadegh of Iran and Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala and financed covert operations against leftists organisations in a number of Latin American countries in the 1950s and 1960s.³⁵⁴ Thirdly, the expeditionary force of Fidel Castro had succeeded in expelling the Batista regime in January 1959. The Washington

240.

³⁵² Reginald Maudling, Memoirs, (London: 1978), pp. 111-122.

³⁵³ Public Papers of the President of the United States: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President; Eisenhower, (Washington: 1961). No. 22, 26 January 1960. pp. 134; and No. 388, 31 January 1961, but particularly his Address in San Francisco to the Commonwealth Club of California. No. 332, 20 October 1960. p. 787

³⁵⁴ Barnett, pp. 22-35 and 264-297 and Blum, pp. 1-14.

administration found it difficult to relate to the Castro regime and by 1960 strained relationship was fractured when an aborted CIA sponsored invasion was repelled.³⁵⁵ In 1962 the Washington administration discovered that Soviet missiles based in Cuba were aimed at America and Kennedy demanded their withdrawal and clamped an embargo on Cuba.³⁵⁶ The American administration had scored a significant victory in 1962 when the Kremlin was forced to dismantle the missile bases in Cuba but there was little they could do about the fact that the Castro administration had assumed a distinctly anti-American posture.³⁵⁷ The State Department did not admit that Cuba was "unrecoverable" to them but they were more determined than ever that there should not be another communist beachhead in the region.³⁵⁸

While it seemed that HMG was still not explicitly opposed to independence for Guiana, American forces hostile to the idea continued to work to prevent it. In June 1962 six local trade

³⁵⁵ The Kennedy Papers, 1961, No. 119, 12 April 1961. pp. 258-259; Victor Marchetti and John Marks, The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence, (New York: 1975), p. 289; Cohen, pp. 113-115 and Blum, p. 208-216.

³⁵⁶ The Kennedy Papers 1961, No. 107, 21 March 1961. pp. 255-256; Ibid., 1962, No. 32, 3 February 1962. p. 106 and Nos. 485, 486, 488, 489 and 491, of 22, 23, 25, 26 and 27 October 1962. pp. 806- 813; Warren I. Cohen, American Secretaries of States and Their Diplomacy: Dean Rusk, (New Jersey: 1980), pp. 113-115. For the British response to what the Allies made a global concern, see. HLD, 244, 30 October 1962. 2; 25 October 1962. 518-524, and 8 November 1962. 347-349.

³⁵⁷ Cohen, pp. 149-160 and The Kennedy Papers, 1962. Nos. 492, 493, 494, 501 and 515 of 27 and 28 October, 2 and 20 November 1962. pp. 813-838.

³⁵⁸ Jerome Levinson and Juan de Onis, The Alliance that Lost its Way; A Critical Report on The Alliance for Progress, (Chicago: 1970), p. 56.

unionists were recruited for training at the American Institute of Free Labour Development (AIFLD) in the United States.³⁵⁹ At the expiration of their training they were employed within the trade union movement at the expense of the AIFLD.³⁶⁰

Serafino Romualdi, the American trade unionist behind the scheme subsequently confessed his role in the politics of destabilisation in Guiana and reported that when the BGTUC decided to call a general strike in an attempt to block the passage of the Dr Jagan's labour bill, he had been requested to put the Institute's six interns, who were working with various local unions, at the disposals strike committee. He boasted that they played a major role in the success achieved by the opposition.³⁶¹

In May 1963 Richard Ishmael MPCA and TUC president was reported as saying that between 1958 and 1961 the TUC received ICFTU funding to the sum of \$5,000 and \$8,5000 from ORIT between 1961 and 1963.³⁶² Additionally the TUC received another \$11,876 from

³⁵⁹ "Survey of The Alliance for Progress: Labour Policies and Programs", Staff Report of The United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on American Republics Affairs, 15 July 1968. pp. 8-9; Paul Jacobs, "American Unions and the CIA" Memorandum, from the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 2 August 1967. pp. 22-28; Blum, pp. 118-119; Romualdi, 345-352; Stanley Meisler, "Meddling in Latin America: The Dubious Role of the AFL-CIO," The Nation, 10 February 1964. pp 133-138 and Sidney Lens, "Labour and the CIA," The Progressive, April 1967. pp. 25-29.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.,

³⁶¹ Romualdi, p. 352.

³⁶² The Guiana Graphic, 3 May 1963.

other undisclosed American sources.³⁶³ In terms of the current salaries scales and the normal expenses of the average trade union of the day this was a more than significant contribution but in 1963 alone the TUC was reputed to have received \$125,000 per week from American sources to fund a strike which continued several weeks after the stated reasons for adopting strike action had been withdrawn. The anti-PPP American trade union connection in Guiana can be traced to the jurisdiction dispute between the MPCA and the PPP backed GIWU and the Cold War international politics of the United States.³⁶⁴ As we have seen the MPCA, bereft of popular support within the TUC and threatened by the GIWU found it expedient to abandon the WFTU and join the anti-communist ICFTU.³⁶⁵ In 1955 the TUC adopted a similar course and as a consequence the MPCA assumed an importance in the organisation that was out of proportion to its influence among the workers it represented in the MPCA. Increasingly over the years since 1955 the TUC came under the influence of the ICFTU and its Latin American arm, The Inter-American Regional Organisation of Workers, ORIT, so the MPCA and, by extension, the TUC opposed the PPP in the 1957 and 1961 election.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Cheddi Jagan to President John F. Kennedy, 22 June 1963. (Archives of the PPP).

³⁶⁵ Staff Report of the United States Foreign Relations Committee, 15 July 1968. pp. 8-9. For even greater details see the earlier investigative works, Drew Pearson, "Castro and Jagan" The Washington Post, 22 March 1964 and The Sunday Times, 16 and 23 April 1967.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. and Jacobs, pp. 22-23.

Serafino Romualdi of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and vice president of ORIT was appointed Interamerican representative of the AFL-CIO. A cold warrior who believed that trade unions could be equipped to effectively combat world communism, he subsequently confessed his role in British Guiana.

I never tried to deny Dr. Jagan's charges. As a matter of fact I publicly acknowledged the fact that, having become convinced of Dr Jagan's subservience to the communist movement since my first visit to British Guiana in 1951, I did everything in my power to strengthen the democratic trade union forces opposed to him and to expose Jagan's pro-communist activities from the day he was elected Prime Minister.³⁶⁷

Romualdi entered an alliance with the Public Service International, PSI, a union which through one of its leaders, Arnold Zander, had come under the influence of the CIA. The PSI which under Zander's guidance appointed the CIA operative Howard McCabe as its regional representative, over the period 1958-1964, received CIA funding to increase its influence among civil service associations in Latin America including Guiana.³⁶⁸

Another American organisation involved in the anti-PPP crusade

³⁶⁷ Romualdi, 346.

³⁶⁸ Staff Report of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Agee, pp. 74-77; Stanley Miesler, "Meddling in Latin America: The Dubious Role of the AFL-CIO" The Nation, 10 February 1964. 133-138; Sidney Lens, "Labour and the CIA" The Progressive, April 1967. 25-29; and The Sunday Times, 16 and 23 April 1967.

was the American Institute for Free Labour Development, AIFLD, which using funding received from the Agency for International Development, AID, became engaged in recruiting and training local trade unionists for anti-communist activities.³⁶⁹ International capitalists with strong Latin American capital investments, J.P. Grace was Chairman, CIA Latin American "expert" was appointed president and Romualdi a full time director. The Organisation engaged in the development of democratic trade union movements in the region but its anti-communists commitment overshadowed its activities and opposition to the PPP government which was considered communist and to which Britain was determined to grant political independence in the near future was inevitable.³⁷⁰

Concerns were expressed early in 1963 about the destabilising role of American trade unions in the colony. Hassan Ali, a graduate of the AIFLD charged that the America institute, as an arm of US government, "which is creating disharmony among the peoples of the underdeveloped world."³⁷¹ Later Jagan in a letter to the Editor, New York Times, made a similar charge against the American unionists.³⁷² These allegations were repeated in a

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ The Kennedy Papers 1961, Presidential Address in Miami at the Opening of the AFL-CIO Convention. No. 499, 7 December 1961. pp. 786-793. See also the originally prepared message in which he congratulated the organisation, which he claimed "has strengthened the cause of freedom around the world..." p. 793.

³⁷¹ The Daily Chronicle, 28 february 1963.

³⁷² The New York Times, 28 June 1963.

letter to Kennedy.³⁷³ Local trade unionist Winslow Carrington defended the institute against charges that it provided training for the overthrow of Caribbean governments but many remained unconvinced.³⁷⁴ The Trinidad Guardian, for example, was not satisfied and repeated the charges forcing the BGTUC to come to the defence of the ICFTU/ORIT and other American unions involved in the local strike.³⁷⁵ In August 1963, however, Ben Segal, described as an Educator with the AIFLD, admitted the role of the organisations in the struggle in the colony, and argued that,

As members of the free trade union movement they could not regard any group as foreign. The problem of one was the problem of all and each had to assist the other at all times.³⁷⁶

In June 1963 President Kennedy stopped over in London on his way to Italy and conferred with Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ Jagan to Kennedy, 16 April 1963. (PPP Archives).

³⁷⁴ The Daily Chronicle, 17 June 1963.

³⁷⁵ The Trinidad Guardian, 11 July 1963.

³⁷⁶ Associated Press, 25 August 1963 and Romualdi has also admitted the role of this organisation in recruiting agents for the crusade against Jagan. See, Confidential Report, "Fact on Cheddi Jagan and his Communist controlled PPP in British Guiana. Free Labour's 10 Year Struggle to Preserve Independence" July 1964 in SC. No. 00694/65B, No. 1, Special Report: British Dependencies in the Western Hemisphere. CIA Office Of Current Intelligence. Presented on 29 October 1965.

³⁷⁷ Joint Statement following Discussions with Prime Minister Macmillan at His Home in Birch Grove, Sussex, The Kennedy Papers, 1963, No. 285, 30 June 1963. 543-544; Schlesinger, 886, The Times, 29 June 1963 reported agreement between Dean Rusk and Lord Home while The New York Times, 10 July 1963 reported a similar agreement between Kennedy and Macmillan. Drew Pearson in The Washington Post of 22 March confirmed that Kennedy had persuaded Macmillan to postpone the grant of independence to British Guiana

While the transcripts of these discussions are still secret the indications are that Kennedy successfully persuaded Macmillan against immediate independence for Guiana. Drew Pearson, whose access to the most reliable sources on Capitol Hill made him the envy of the White House press corps, reported that under pressure from Kennedy HMG agreed to

refuse to grant independence to Guiana because of the general strike against pro-communist Prime Minister, Cheddi Jagan. The strike was secretly inspired by a combination of United States Central Intelligence Agency money and British intelligence.³⁷⁸

The Labour Party frequently criticised HMG's policy in Guiana and particularly the fact that HMG seemed to be responding to pressure from Washington. Even Ian Macleod, former Secretary of State for the Colonies, complained that the HMG was being persuaded by American fears that were grossly "exaggerated" and noted that

The American attitude seems to me to be dangerous in this respect. If one puts off independence because one fears that one may get a Left-wing Government, in my experience, the most likely thing to happen is that we will get a Government still further to the left.³⁷⁹

In spite of such reservations within the Commons that transcended

due to the general strike. Parsons further revealed that the strike "was secretly inspired by a combination of United States Central Intelligence Agency money and British Intelligence."

³⁷⁸ Drew Pearson, The Washington Post, 22 March 1964.

³⁷⁹ HCD., 694, 27 April 1964. 106-111.

party lines, when Labour formed the Government in 1964, the Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, accepted Dean Rusk's position that, "the United States would resist the rise of British Guiana as an independent Castro-type state."³⁸⁰

The 1964 General Election and the Eclipse of the PPP.

In spite of all its protests the PPP was determined to win the 1964 election to be held in December under the new Sandys rulings. But the opposition had scored all the points since the 1961 election. They had embarrassed the PPP administration and on a number of occasions rendered it impotent forcing it in 1962, 1963 and in 1964 to seek the protection of British troops. In 1964 the Governor had been forced to assume increased powers through an Order in Council reclaiming responsibility for Home Affairs from the PPP. Additionally, the PPP had been unable to bring about its promised economic development and it was apparent that international funding would be withheld if a PPP administration were returned to office.

A number of new parties were formed in preparation for the 1964 election. The three which endured to nomination day were **The Justice Party, JP**, led by the former Minister of Home Affairs, Balram Singh Rai and Jai Narine Singh.³⁸¹ This party focused exclusively on the Indian community. Arguing that after three

³⁸⁰ Associated Press, 22 October 1964; The New York Times, 31 October 1964; Walton, 210-213; Radosh, p. 402 and Barnett, pp. 237-243.

³⁸¹ All information on the political parties were compiled from the columns of The Daily Chronicle, 1 October 1964.

years it was obvious that the PPP was incapable of governing Rai accused the PPP of exposing a vulnerable Indian community to Black violence. The **Peace and Equality Party, (PEP)** was led by Kelvin De Freitas, an inexperienced middle class political aspirant who sought to benefit from the successes of D'Aguiar and the United Force.³⁸² It lacked popular leadership and its membership never threatened to turn it into a creditable political force. The **Guiana United Muslim Party, (GUMP)** focused on a narrow section of the Indian community.³⁸³ It advocated peace and harmony as well as special treatment for muslims as a minority group in Guiana. It was not a fundamentalist grouping even though it was a religious party. One other party, the **National Labour Front, (NLF)** which had withdrawn from the 1961 election but retained an organisational structure throughout the intervening period announced its intention to contest.³⁸⁴

There were therefore seven political parties contesting the election and on nomination day they presented 199 candidates to the 247,604 strong constituency.³⁸⁵

The election was bitterly contested and physical violence was a

³⁸² PEP, "What the PEP Stand For." Political pamphlet, 1964.

³⁸³ GUMP, "For A New Guiana" The Political Philosophy of The GUMP, 1964.

³⁸⁴ NLF, "Vote NLF for a Better Guiana." Political Pamphlet, 1964.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 25 October 1964 and Report of the House of Assembly General Election Report 1964, (under a system of Proportional Representation), (Georgetown: 1965), p. 15, para., 31.

disturbing feature throughout the campaign.³⁸⁶ A few rural areas were still proclaimed emergency areas and several members of the PPP were still detained. However, from the moment the election date, 7 December, had been announced the Governor increased the rate at which detainees were released.³⁸⁷ There were two main electoral issues adopted by all the parties. The first was independence. The PPP demanded a new mandate to lead Guiana to independence but the opposition parties argued that independence under the PPP would mean further economic retardation and increased civil hostilities.³⁸⁸

The second feature was national reconciliation. All the parties proclaimed the virtues of national unity and with but few exceptions sought to attract votes from across ethnic boundaries.³⁸⁹ The exceptions were the JP and GUMP both of which were decidedly ethnic orientated.³⁹⁰ It is however necessary to

³⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 10, para., 17 and The Daily Chronicle, 24 October 1964.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 10 October 1964, In spite of these efforts a Commonwealth Team of Observers commented adversely on the disenfranchisement of political detainees. Great Britain, British Guiana Report by the Commonwealth Tea, of Observers on the Election in December 1964, (London: 1964). Col., 359. p. 7, para., 18.

³⁸⁸ PPP, Manifesto: General Election-December 7, 1964, (Georgetown: 1964). pp. 8-9. PNC, Guiana's New Road: The 1964 Election Manifesto of the PNC, (Georgetown: 1964). pp. 2-3 and 24-25 and UF, Highway to Happiness, The Manifesto of the United Force, (Georgetown: 1964) pp 7-9.

³⁸⁹ Great Britain, Report by the Commonwealth Team of Observers on the Election in December 1964, (London: 1965) Col. 359.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.,

note that increasingly as the campaign intensified ethnic appeals both covert and overt became commonplace for most parties with the possible exception of the UF which hoped for a significant increase of its 1961 electoral gains and realised that it could only do so by winning votes of the urban Black and rural Indian.³⁹¹

Both the PNC and, particularly, the UF assured the electorate that they were confident of International capital investment to fund Guiana's development.³⁹² The PNC with its New Road reiterated its 1961 promises, while the UF with its Highway To Happiness, clarified and further developed its 1961 promises.³⁹³ The UF was so confident of its ability to win American capital funding that there were those who believed that the party's elaborate and expensive election campaign was being funded by the State Department.³⁹⁴ The PPP could not match the elaborate promises of the opposition but argued that with independence a PPP government would be able to trade with the nations of its choice and would receive financial assistance from countries other than the United States and Britain.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ UF, Report of the Pre-election General Assembly of the United Force, 21 October 1964, (Georgetown: 1964). pp. 7-8.

³⁹² PNC, New Road 1964, and UF, Highway to Happiness 1964.

³⁹³ Ibid.,

³⁹⁴ The Report of the General Election 1964, p. 27.
PNC, \$54, 562.20; UF, 36, 229.24 and PPP, 33,022.70.

³⁹⁵ PPP, Manifesto 1964, p. 10.

The system of proportional representation adopted by HMG converted the colony into a single constituency with the parties each submitting a list of candidates in order of preference. Votes therefore were cast for the party and not an individual candidate within a party.

1964 Election Results³⁹⁶

	Candidates	Votes	Seats
PPP	35	190,332	24
PNC	53	96,657	22
UF	53	29,612	7
JP	36	1,334	—
GUMP	14	1,194	—
PEP	2	224	—
NLF	6	117	—
TOTAL	199	238,530	53

	1961		1964			
	% vote	seats	% vote	seats	% change	
PPP	42.63	20	45.84	24	3.21	increase.
PNC	40.99	11	40.52	22	.47	decrease.
UF	16.38	4	12.41	7	3.97	decrease.

The electorate's response to repeated calls for a high turn out produced a 96.9 percent turnout on polling day.³⁹⁷ The results indicated that voting proceeded along ethnic lines, a result

³⁹⁶ Compiled from The Election Report 1964, p. 23, para., 48 and p. 26, para., 52.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 57. Appendix IX, Table I and II.

which contradicted the predictions of the Secretary of State and the hopes of both the Conservative and Labour Party that proportional representation would produce multi ethnic support for the parties.

The results also confirmed the popularity of both the PPP and the PNC. The PPP however was the only party to show an overall increase in its percentage of votes received. While the PPP increased its support by 3.21 percent, the overall changes in the percentage of votes received were relatively small. In the circumstances while the reduction of its votes was a disappointment, because the percentage was very small it was not a severe embarrassment and the PNC was able to ignore it. It was different in the case of the UF which once again, in spite of the most attractive campaign machinery which accounted for a substantial capital outlay, and the general recognition that of all the leaders D'Aguiar was undoubtedly the one most assured of American capital investment, suffered a three percent reduction in popular support.³⁹⁸ However, because of the new system the changes in the number of seats won were significant. While both the PNC and the UF experienced a reduction in the percentage of votes cast at the polls they received a substantial increase in the allocation of seats. With just under 46 percent of the votes the PPP fell short of the required majority of seats by three. On the other hand the combined opposition enjoyed a preponderance of five.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

Jagan tried unsuccessfully to win the support of Burnham even offering him the premiership but Burnham was not enticed. Assured of the support of the UF Burnham announced his readiness to form the new government.³⁹⁹ Frustrated and convinced that he had been cheated Jagan refused to resign.⁴⁰⁰ His refusal created a minor constitutional impasse which required an Order in Council permitting the Governor to dispose of him and invite Burnham to form the new government.⁴⁰¹

Finally, therefore, the process begun in 1953 to defeat the PPP and rid the colony of an alleged communist threat had succeeded. The result was received with mixed reaction in the international media. Whitehall, at times an unenthusiastic participant in the process, was relieved as was Washington. An interesting feature of the end game was the role of the Labour Party. This party had criticised the Sandys solution, deeming it immoral and portending disaster in the colony. Labour had persistently called for a more imaginative solution to the Guiana crisis yet when it got into power it immediately entered into a pact with the Washington administration and abandoned its principled position on Guiana.

Conclusion.

In the end the forces opposed to the PPP had triumphed. In the 1964 general election the PPP was the only party to increase

³⁹⁹ The Daily Chronicle, 10 December 1964.

⁴⁰⁰ The Daily Chronicle, 11 December 1964.

⁴⁰¹ Secretary of State's report on the outcome of the 1964 Guiana election. HCD, 704, 17 December 1964. 121-128; The Daily Chronicle, 12 and 15 December 1964.

its percentage of electoral support while both the PNC and the UF suffered minor reductions. But, because of the new electoral arrangement, it was then possible to remove the PPP from office. With a new regime in office there was less concern in Washington and the way was cleared for the grant of political independence to British Guiana.

The PPP era had thus come to an end with the formation of the 1964 PNC-UF coalition. From 1961 to 1964 the economy had been devastated through the under-funding of development projects, industrial strife, the withdrawal of local capital and the out migration of skilled personnel. Simultaneously successive years of ethnic and community violence had dislocated all sections of the community. Together they had produced a serious loss of confidence. The commercial sector had been impoverished while the important service sector had almost disappeared resulting in shortages of goods and machinery.

The society was strife weary. Communal fear and suspicion had been widespread and there had been a feeling, even among supporters of the PPP, that the tenor of fear, violence and socio-economic destruction would continue until such time as Whitehall had granted Guiana's independence. But there was an ever growing belief that Whitehall, even had she so desired, would not be allowed by Washington to grant Independence to the PPP. There was a feeling of betrayal at the way the political situation was finally resolved and a certain amount of apprehension within the ranks of both the PNC and the UF at a

coalition between such divergent political organisations, but there was also relief that the period of instability was at an end.

This confidence in the eventual restoration of peace, if not harmony, was itself an indication of a consensus among the population that the violence had been inspired by the opposition, which, having been converted into the government, would therefore discontinue the violence. The nationalist movement had been fractured by the agents of Whitehall and Washington utilising the discontent of conservative and racist elements within the society and Guianese nationalism was defeated by the period of dislocation, fear, violence and destruction which they let loose.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CONCLUSION

British Guiana, a British colony since 1803, was developed by expatriate capital and an imported labour force. Its economy was dominated by three products. The oldest and the most important was sugar. Its cultivation was undertaken by the Dutch in the seventeenth century and this was subsequently expanded by the British. The labour requirements for the industry were met first through the enslavement of Africans and after 1834, the importation of an indentured labourer force from Portugal, China and India. The nature of their engagement within the expatriate economy engendered alienation and antagonism and the relationship which developed was confrontational.

In the twentieth century the rice and bauxite industries were developed. Rice was a peasant economy, chronically underfunded and underdeveloped. It nevertheless employed a large portion of the rural Indian population seeking independence from the sugar industry and a better way of life. Bauxite was operated by the American conglomerate, Alcan, which employed a predominantly Black labour force. Those employed in the Bauxite industry were paid high wages but labour conditions were harsh and the workers felt exploited and aggrieved. There was therefore an almost uniform tenor of resentment among the working people of British Guiana.

Trade union organisations emerging after the first great war demanded improvements in the working environment but were

frustrated by unsympathic employers in both the sugar and bauxite industries. At the same time the militance of the working people was repressed by wartime legislation retained on the statute books long after the second world war had ended.

Colonial conditions were also aggravated in the 1940s by a period of rapid population growth, particularly among the Indian community, which strained the limited social and welfare services available while financial constraints, caused by insufficient revenue accumulation and an inability to attract investment, limited the capacity of the colonial administration to expand the social services or create new employment opportunities.

The rice industry which generated employment was located on poorly drained land and subject to frequent inundation. But being peasant, it did not attract enough legislative support and therefore the necessary funding for the preparation of land, its distribution to the peasant population and the mechanisation of the industry. However there were extensive tracts of drained land which were under-utilised by the sugar industry. But Sugar, fearful of its loss of control over the local labour force, was reluctant to make these tracts available to the land hungry population. The peasant rice farmer also believed that the sugar industry, whose officials were appointed to the Rice Board by the colonial administration, was also responsible for the low price he received for his product on the export market. He therefore developed strong feelings against the industry and the colonial administration, dominated by the interest of Sugar, which appeared indifferent to his plight.

The colonial administration composed of British officials and influential persons, mostly Europeans and their allies, was subordinate to HMG whose policy was to encourage the growth of the expatriate economy. This policy of encouragement, necessarily limited the extent to which the colonial administration could levy taxes to raise local revenue to stimulate colonial development. Simultaneously, HMG was not disposed to fund colonial development preferring that such development be financed from surplus local revenue. But the reluctance to persuade the expatriate economy to participate more fully in colonial development left the colonial administration in a persistent state of impoverishment and therefore incapable of undertaking the development initiatives it considered necessary for balanced development and a reduction of growing disaffection.

The helplessness of the colonial population was aggravated by the inaccessible nature of the political process which until 1953 was dominated by interests opposed to the welfare of the working people. The franchise was restrictive, based exclusively on high income and large property qualifications. While the 1939 West India Royal Commission recommended a more liberal franchise arrangement which was accepted by HMG the local legislature, was not disposed to accept a franchise arrangement which would eventually exclude it from office.

Sensing the exasperation of the working people, a group of middle class radicals formed the PAC in 1946 which undertook to prepare the conditions for a socialist party to lead the nationalist

struggle for political independence and the socio-economic transformation of the Guianese society. The success of the PAC resulted in the formation of the PPP in 1950. In recognition of the plural structure of the society the party secured a deliberate racial coalition under the leadership of Jagan and Burnham and in 1951, the Waddington Commission awarded the colony an advanced constitution with adult suffrage. Though critical of the limitations of the new constitution the popular coalition participated in the 1953 general election winning eighteen of the twenty four seats. The radical enthusiasm of the inexperienced PPP administration antagonised local opponents who feared that the socialist overtones of Guianese nationalism would endanger vested economic interests in the colony. The party's dissatisfaction with British colonial policy and especially its impatience with the slow pace of constitutional advance, created regional tension within the British Caribbean where radicalism tended to be perceived as communism which many other nationalist leaders thought would slow down the pace of constitutional development in the region even further. Additionally, because of economic and strategic interests in the area the Washington administration was apprehensive of the emergence of a communist regime in the region. There thus emerged, both internally and externally, the fear that the PPP, as a communist regime, constituted a regional security risk and a serious threat to the economic stability, political development and constitutional advance of the region.

That there was little, beyond communist rhetoric, to support

these accusations was immaterial, principally because the western world was engrossed in the Cold War in which communism was perceived as a dangerous threat to the safety of international capitalism and western democracy. Since the PPP administration constituted a potential threat to the security of the hemisphere and American investments in the region it was summarily dismissed from office in October 1953, a mere 133 days after it had been sworn in.

However neither Washington nor Whitehall was indifferent to the circumstances which created the radicalism of Guiana's nationalism or the conditions which secured its popular appeal and between 1953 and 1957 they endeavoured to ameliorate the circumstances and rectify the conditions in an effort to undermine the popularity of the PPP. To create an image of popular participation in this exercise Whitehall appointed an Interim Administration made up of respectable members of the local community and ambitious political personalities to assist the Governor in what was intended to be a programme of wide ranging socio-economic reforms.

The effort failed because HMG was slow to release the necessary funding to launch the programme of reforms. Additionally, Whitehall could not marshall the technical and administrative personnel necessary to undertake and supervise the programme. Then, when the programme was finally underway, its public image was tarnished by administrative indiscretions and scandals of graft and corruption. Underpinning all of this was the

unpopularity of both the idea of an unelected Interim Administration and its membership which, initially lacked political credibility and subsequently, the charisma to develop political constituencies.

The failure of the much heralded programme of reforms added to the unpopularity of the repressive initiatives undertaken, by Whitehall in conjunction with the local administration, to destroy the PPP. Because the physical neglect and social impoverishment were wide ranging and chronic, the programme of reforms possessed potential for winning popular support in the colony; but its failure to produce relief, the imposition of an unelected regime in place of the PPP and the harassment of popular leaders undermined HMG's credibility in the colony and by 1955 the entire 1953 initiative was condemned, both by Whitehall and the colonial Governor, as a failure.

Its singular success was the creation of a fissure in the nationalist coalition by the defection of Forbes Burnham in 1955. For personal and tactical reasons, Burnham had been at odds with the rest of the leadership of the movement. In 1954 the Robertson Commission chose to disguise this conflict as ideological and Burnham was not reluctant to perpetuate this excuse. But the advantages of the split were, at the time, not as obvious as they subsequently became.

HMG therefore became reconciled to the failure of its initiatives in Guiana and it was in these circumstances that the colony was

reluctantly returned to democratic rule in 1957. But the same forces which had opposed the PPP in 1953 were once again arrayed against it. There were however important differences. In the first place, the defection of Burnham had created a focal point around which two distinct anti-nationalist trends were fostered. The first was ethnicity. Burnham had been installed as the symbol of Black aspiration in the nationalist movement. The second was regional. In assuming the role of spokesperson for the Black dispossessed, Burnham acquired a high profile in the city of Georgetown where Blacks enjoyed a numerical preponderance. This peculiar division of the colony which equated rural with Indian and urban with Black therefore provided a convenient structural demographic field to be exploited for sectional or ethnic gain. The politics of race therefore became a resurgent feature threatening the nationalist movement. Because it was conspicuous it was increasingly exploited and after the 1957 general election assumed a primary function in nationalist politics. As a consequence, increasingly after 1957 the nationalist movement became vulnerable to powerful influences, both internal and external, that were opposed to Guiana's nationalist aspirations and the politics of the PPP.

The 1957 PPP administration survived under increasing conditions of stress. Economic development was frustrated by capital starvation engineered by Washington, which could but did not aid development in the colony, and Whitehall, which in any case was unable to provide development funding. But political reversals and economic stagnation had not reduced the enthusiasm for

constitutional advance and the dissatisfaction with the retarded constitution under which the colony had been returned to democracy generated further resentment within the ranks of the PPP and the nationalist section of the PNC. In the circumstances, the demands for constitutional advance tended to be articulated in unison.

Washington continued to press HMG for the liberation of her African colonies while, at the same time, opposing constitutional advance for Guiana. In the face of these contradictory pressures, HMG's commitment to constitutional decolonisation for the colonies conflicted with her reluctance to offend the Washington administration and placed Whitehall in an increasingly invidious position. HMG could not concede political independence to less advanced colonies while ignoring the consistent demands emanating from Guiana.

HMG's position was further complicated by her decision that, for the time being at least, it was inexpedient to have British Guiana within the 1958 West Indian Federation. Inclusion in the West Indian federation would have provided Guiana with the oblique constitutional advance earmarked for the colonies under the federal arrangement. In spite of the constraints, in 1960 HMG committed herself to independence for Guiana but postponed fixing the date until after a general election in 1961. However there were two important codicils. The first, that the constitutional conference after the 1961 election would be concerned with fixing that date and the second, that independence

would be granted no earlier than two years after the 1961 election or immediately after the West Indian Federation became independent, whichever came first. This commitment startled the opposition and set the stage for political mischief in the years 1961-64.

Both Whitehall and Washington, though skeptical of the strength of the political opponents of the PPP, had hoped for a shift in popular support away from the PPP. Additionally, they hoped that the shift would be significant enough to justify the formation of an alternative government in Guiana. For their part, the political parties without exception, though with varying degrees of enthusiasm, supported the notion of immediate independence. Each realised that this was still the only way to secure a political audience in Guiana. The PNC, after a few months on the campaign trail, was sanguine enough to demand immediate independence irrespective of the outcome of the election. The third party of significance, the UF, was less precipitate, announcing a number of preconditions to its support for immediate independence.

Both opposition parties received the covert support of Washington and Whitehall, while the UF was even accused of receiving American funding. While most of this would have been private finance, the fact that such support was advocated on the floor of the American Congress, was sufficient for both the PPP and PNC to label the party an agent of the American administration. On the other hand the announcement that large sums of State

Department funding had been earmarked for Guiana once the PNC had removed the PPP from office was enough for the PPP to level similar charges against the PNC.

In spite of this and similar external support for the opposition, the electorate continued to confound the hopes of those opposed to the PPP by returning it to power with its usual majority. An electoral system in which one political party with a plurality of the votes could secure a comfortable preponderance in the legislature in successive elections created discontent among the opposition, who could not be persuaded that they were fairly represented in the legislature. They therefore advocated an electoral system productive of a more representative disposition of the seats in the legislature. This issue had been presented to the 1959 Constitutional Committee where, after exhaustive discussion, it had been outvoted. The parallel Constituent Assembly, set up later that year by the PNC, was favourably disposed to the system and it was again disputed at the 1960 Constitutional Conference in London. However, after the 1961 electoral defeat of the opposition, Washington was converted to the potential of proportional representation for reducing the numerical preponderance of the PPP and persuaded HMG to implement the change.

The April 1961 electoral defeat of the opposition was most inopportune. Not only did it destroy the hopes of a conventional elimination of the PPP but it occurred at the precise moment when American relations with Cuba were at their most contentious and

anti-communist hysteria the dominant issue in regional and international politics. Even moderate opinion on Capitol Hill was apprehensive of the emergence of another communist front in the Caribbean. The strategic implications were undoubtedly preeminent but, even so, the Cuban-communist issue achieved such a high emotional content that ethical considerations were effectively sidelined. In spite of her own commitment to defeat international communism, HMG was nevertheless reluctant to become too overtly associated with either the anti-Cuba-communist conspiracy or, more especially, the wholesale application of the Cuba-communist yardstick to Guiana. But foreign policy commitments overruled other policy considerations and in the end the UK government cooperated with the Washington administration against political independence for Guiana. Nevertheless, when other legitimate commitments forced HMG to defer the 1962 Constitutional Conference for which she was severely criticised in the UN, HMG's Representative reiterated the UK Government's commitment to Guiana's independence in a manner unambiguous enough to disturb influential sections in the United States, the UK and Guiana.

Deprived of the most legitimate means of disposing of the PPP, the opposition adopted extra-legal measures. This strategy was aided by two significant features of the popular politics of Guiana after 1955. The first was the increasing tendency of the opposition to successfully organise popular support along ethnic lines. This resulted in the PNC achieving control of significant sections of the urban work force, particularly among industrial

and public service workers simultaneously as the UF expanded its control over significant sections of the workforce in the commercial and banking sector. Combined, the two parties were therefore capable of effectively disrupting the PPP administration whenever they chose to do so.

The effectiveness with which they could do so was guaranteed by the second peculiarity of party politics in which increasingly the popular support of the PPP was restricted to the rural regions of the colony. This was not surprising since at the height of its popularity in 1953, the nationalist coalition did not win the New Amsterdam constituency. In 1957, the Burnhamites secured the three Georgetown constituencies and in 1961, the PPP conceded every urban seat.

The most significant aspect of this demographic peculiarity was the fact that the urban support for the PNC was distinctly anti-Indian while the support for the UF, though still not exclusively anti-Indian, was predominantly non-rural. The essential irony of this characteristic was the fact that government was urban centred and the PPP administration was conducted almost exclusively in the city of Georgetown. The PPP was therefore weakest at its centres of administration and as a consequence at the mercy of the opposition. The politics of protest and destabilisation adopted by the opposition after 1961 was therefore logically urban centred and inescapably assumed an ethnic characteristic.

A significant characteristic of the confrontation was the opportunity to conduct it under the legitimate cover of industrial action. This secured two important advantages to the opponents of the PPP. In the first place, it legitimised political action however tangential the trade union implication and tenuous the motivation. Neither the PPP nor the Governor and his officials could therefore afford to be precipitate or less than cautious in their response to trade union militancy. Traditionally, such unrest would rapidly acquire regional and even international support. Secondly, it permitted American and British interests, under the guise of fraternal trade union relations, the opportunity of channelling assistance, both administrative and financial, to an organised effort, whose principal objective was the overthrow of the democratically elected government.

The process through which American funding was received in Guiana is easier to distinguish than the original source of the funds. The disguised sources of the funding derived from the fact that most of it had been channelled through legitimate organisations under the control of the CIA. Recent publications by former CIA operatives which expose the subtle but nevertheless devious networking of CIA funding for covert operations the world over have inevitably to be relied on as the main source of information, since the official records are still classified and, one suspects, the records of such transactions are unlikely to have been retained.

Since Latin America has been a fertile theatre for such covert operations there are a number of sources which directly connect the AFL-CIO with the American CIA in the Guiana disturbances. These disclosures give substance to the limited official confirmation now available. For instance, HMG, while steadfastly refraining from acknowledging the presence and influence of the United States administration in Guiana, has admitted to pressure emanating from Washington and to an American presence in the disturbances that have occurred in the colony.

1962 to 1964 were years of serious physical violence and civil unrest in the colony. In 1962 this allowed HMG to delay the Constitutional Conference, not scheduling it in the first instance and then postponing it on three subsequent occasions. However when the conference was finally convened, unbridgeable differences among the political parties encouraged HMG to defer the grant of independence. This was of course the preferred outcome for the opponents of the PPP.

Since the election the case for the opposition had acquired greater stature and credibility as a consequence of their utilisation of disruptive policies in the legislature and physical violence in the society. The opposition had succeeded to the extent that stable PPP government seemed possible only with support of British troops in the colony. This deterioration was undoubtedly welcomed by the Washington Administration which did not disguise its distaste for a PPP administration in the region and could not have been ignorant of the role of American

agencies in the turmoil. But there was a strong opposition lobby within the House of Commons as well which provided strategic support for the opposition.

The cumulative consequence of the opposition and the instability it had created significantly reduced the moral compulsion on HMG to be faithful to its 1960 commitment to grant independence even though there were grounds for arguing that the delay in granting political independence was itself productive of political instability and civil unrest. For to concede that the delay was in consequence of political instability was to correspondingly concede the likelihood that the continued exploitation of physical violence would further postpone independence and so encourage the political opponents of the PPP to engage in further violence. HMG was of course unimpressed by this line of reasoning, but not so the opposition which engineered further civil strife in 1963, again with the primary intention of precipitating the fall of the government, either directly through physical violence or as a result of the withdrawal of the constitution as had been done in 1953.

After 1962 the opposition was confident that it could not lose by employing such tactics in the colony. For even if the government of Cheddi Jagan was not actually brought down by physical violence, they would at the least achieve a further postponement of independence. The opposition also benefited by exposing the PPP administration as incompetent and unfit to govern, simultaneously as it displayed its own increasing

political influence and won external support for its case.

The overall success of the opposition is revealed in the Secretary of State's resolution of the impasse created by continuing disagreement among the representatives at the 1963 Constitutional conference. Faced with three contentious issues Duncan Sandys resolved each in favour of the opposition.

From 1961 onwards, HMG's policy in Guiana was rigorously scrutinised by the anti-colonial organs of the UN, which forum was exploited with increasing success by the PPP. However, it was by this time common knowledge among the members of these Committees that HMG's ability to deal with the Guiana situation was seriously impaired by the attitude of the Washington administration to the question of independence for Guiana.

This American influence was reflected in the Secretary of State's decision in 1963 to have another general election before independence and the imposition of an electoral system which seemed likely to produce a coalition of political parties in the new administration. Proportional Representation had been favoured for this purpose since 1959 when Governor Renison had attempted, without much success, to persuade HMG of the usefulness of the system. After the 1961 electoral success of the PPP Washington embraced the idea and successfully persuaded HMG to a similar position.

In 1963 HMG did not disguise the true motive behind the adoption

of proportional representation. When the Governor announced, during the course of the election campaign, that HMG was not bound to call upon the party with the most seats to form the government, it seemed clear that the way was being made easy for a transfer of the administration to the opposition.

HMG's policy did not produce immediate peace. Indeed, violence which had become a common feature of the every day existence in the colony increased dramatically and under intense pressure from various sources, particularly, the Labour Party, to devise a less contentious solution in Guiana, HMG disclosed her own disappointment with her efforts. Her willingness to seek a solution at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in 1963 was one indication of this exasperation. Her weak defence of her policy and her conciliatory attitude to opposition suggestions in the House of Commons were other indications.

It is however possible that in the former HMG was no doubt seeking the support of an authoritative body either, for legitimising her policy in Guiana or for the adoption of a policy solution contrary to the wishes of the Washington administration. If so, then HMG was disappointed with the results of these discussions, for short of expressing confidence in HMG's ability to cope, the Commonwealth Prime Ministers neither endorsed policy initiatives already taken nor suggested new ones. This added to HMG's discomfiture but did nothing for the Guiana problem.

The Conservatives were removed from office in 1964, a few months

prior to the general election in British Guiana. However, in spite of its strident criticism of the policies of the former Conservative government, the Labour Party failed to alter any aspect of Conservative policy in Guiana.¹ A hasty Washington conference ensured that Labour adopted no new policy initiative offensive to the political sensitivity of the Washington administration.

The response of the international community was one of relief. There were a few awkward questions asked about the manner in which the PPP had been deposed but such was the cynicism of the period which had produced the Cypriot and Congo disasters that in general few were willing to linger for long over the issue. The solution was an embarrassment but it was neither unexpected nor unusual. Whitehall welcomed the new administration assuring it of the support of the British Government. Washington's welcome included a promise of development funding.

The coalition government assumed office with Burnham as Prime Minister and D'Aguiar as Finance Minister and not surprisingly an uneasy peace descended on the colony. Burnham, in ingratiating his regime with the Washington administration, discontinued all fraternal relations which had been developed by the PPP with socialist ^{states}. His efforts placated America and it was not surprising, therefore, that a Constitutional conference convened in London in November 1965 fixed a date, 26 May 1966,

¹ Report on meeting between Jagan and Secretary of State in London. HCD, 701, 12 November 1964. 101-102.

for the independence of the colony.

The successful conclusion of the 1965 Constitutional Conference was undoubtedly facilitated by the absence of a PPP delegation at the conference. As a final protest the party boycotted the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly and the conference. The Labour Government, which could not have been proud of its total capitulation to Washington and its volte face on Guiana, despatched Secretary of State, Anthony Greenwood, on a public relations mission to the colony from 12 to 16 February 1965.² But the PPP, having been let down on one too many occasions by the Labour Party, ignored Greenwood's overtures and the mission succeeded only in according limited legitimacy to the Burnham administration.

Recognising that their boycott of the legislature was unlikely to affect the course of development in the colony the PPP returned to parliament in May 1965. Jagan subsequently submitted a list of demands to the Governor. These demands constituted the party's preconditions to limited cooperation with the administration and attendance at the independence conference and when they were rejected the invitation to attend the Constitutional Conference had been declined.³

² Secretary of State announces his plan to visit Guiana "to make personal assessment of the situation and to establish personal contact with the leaders." HCD, 706, 11 February 1965. 507 and Ibid., 18 February 1965. Secretary of State's report on his visit to British Guiana. 266-267.

³ The most critical demand was an end to the state of emergency which continued in force even though the Government had itself admitted that calm prevailed throughout the colony.

HMG was disconcerted by the absence of the PPP, the largest of the political parties in the colony, at the conference but the delay in granting independence had been the source of so much conflict among the Guianese people and embarrassment to HMG that the inconvenience created by the absence of the PPP was far outweighed by the desire to be finally rid of Guiana.⁴

The process through which the nationalist struggle in British Guiana was frustrated was far from unique, even though its peculiar incidents: the role of the Washington administration and the ambivalence of Whitehall have not been duplicated with similar effect elsewhere. The underlying reality was that the transfer of power to former colonies did not proceed at a predictable and even pace and irrationality was not an unknown factor. But perhaps the most significant factor of the decolonisation process was the fact that in most circumstances political independence remained an imperial concession. It was never accorded the status of a fundamental right of the colonised people in spite of all the rhetoric of nationalist politics on the one hand and "the wind of change" ethos on the other. Whitehall therefore decided if and when a colony was ready for independence and whether it was prudent to concede independence at all. In Guiana HMG chose to exercise her imperial options and

Burnham however argued that the state of emergency was necessary for the continuation of civil peace. This was a logical extension of his earlier claim that the PPP had been the architect of the 1962-64 civil unrest. His caution also derived from a fear that the PPP would in anger attempt civil unrest to further delay the grant of independence.

⁴ Secretary of State's response to Hugh Jenkins' intervention. Ibid., 11 February 1965. 537.

dictated the pace at which the colony proceed^{ed} to independence.

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EXPORT EARNINGS, 1945-1964.*

Year	Sugar	Rice	Bauxite	Gold/ Diamonds	Others	Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
1945	12,280	2,700	3,001	833	2,043	21,303
1946	14,322	2,450	6,063	1,634	2,232	26,701
1947	21,564	2,302	6,729	1,366	2,546	34,507
1948	20,337	2,060	9,512	1,855	2,791	36,355
1949	26,257	3,098	12,009	2,057	2,355	45,806
1950	27,390	3,962	13,832	1,982	3,113	50,279
1951	31,162	4,382	16,417	2,378	3,701	58,040
1952	45,593	6,085	22,240	2,517	4,404	80,839
1953	41,600	9,527	23,535	2,587	4,263	81,512
1954	44,797	9,278	23,235	2,643	4,563	84,074
1955	44,151	12,516	24,787	2,737	2,569	89,041
1956	46,363	9,856	29,335	2,246	5,543	93,343
1957	59,769	9,167	29,156	2,333	6,234	107,019
1958	60,732	4,785	20,562	2,486	7,785	97,541
1959	52,217	12,536	24,789	3,066	9,414	103,881
1960	63,366	15,402	29,469	4,756	15,291	126,994
1961	62,601	22,626	28,475	5,134	29,496	148,249
1962	66,469	20,469	31,133	3,707	29,513	163,654
1963	82,336	20,091	28,499	3,532	38,864	172,926
1964	61,118	21,847	30,782	4,473	44,234	165,555

* Omitting 000

ANNUAL PRODUCTION, 1946-1964.

Year	Sugar Tons	Bauxite Tons	Rice Ounces	Gold Carats	Diamond	Timber Cub'ft
1946	147,780	1,120,015	22,688	10,724	n.a.	418,172
1947	185,112	1,290,367	19,689	16,770	28,645	655,965
1948	136,686	1,290,367	17,585	16,025	25,905	648,277
1949	173,833	1,873,166	26,147	16,331	33,959	596,297
1950	173,272	1,757,650	29,066	11,420	34,375	651,107
1951	180,252	1,583,117	30,072	10,004	37,034	933,325
1952	234,185	2,286,000	27,675	15,007	39,684	927,883
1953	211,820	2,112,000	39,300	12,372	35,511	1,006,841
1954	243,915	2,126,000	36,657	11,337	29,583	826,588
1955	211,797	2,569,000	39,359	16,959	32,352	1,086,844
1956	245,911	2,107,000	41,326	16,552	30,057	1,280,499
1957	255,536	2,021,000	38,163	8,305	27,705	1,410,630
1958	300,321	1,364,000	17,676	10,777	31,058	1,632,728
1959	255,153	1,514,000	49,926	712	60,922	1,540,778
1960	308,992	2,095,000	63,178	—	92,223	1,423,703
1961	313,000	1,617,000	90,247	—	121,000	1,191,553
1962	312,479	1,832,000	79,468	265	91,439	1,124,594
1963	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1964	235,500	1,319,000	77,575	—	104,000	1,400

ANNUAL REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE, 1945-1964

Year	Revenue \$	Expenditure \$
1945	3,168,575	3,338,301
1946	3,159,063	3,252,744
1947	4,183,659	4,111,765
1948	4,594,497	4,390,329
1949	4,878,689	4,651,880
1950	4,498,177	4,912,691
1951	5,494,917	5,651,880
1952	6,795,264	6,468,432
1953	6,725,726	6,540,307
1954	7,264,922	7,195,757
1955	7,537,829	7,080,580
1956	8,721,636	8,377,686
1957	9,532,044	8,962,620
1958	10,203,012	9,659,018
1959	10,141,591	9,492,683
1960	11,686,403	10,477,961
1961	12,569,692	11,877,700
1962	12,471,128	12,992,402
1963	13,323,490	12,919,076
1964	14,245,492	14,716,248

POPULATION OF BRITISH GUIANA 1945-1964*

Year	Total	Indians	Blacks	A'indians	Euros	Chinese	Mixed
1945	373,598	164,522	137,422	9,516	9,617	3,648	47,853
1947	390,857	173,786	142,170	9,673	11,149	3,528	50,551
1948	402,615	180,129	144,980	9,757	12,087	3,558	52,065
1949	414,360	186,762	148,001	9,934	12,554	3,534	53,505
1950	425,156	182,435	151,650	13,445	12,525	3,520	52,600
1951	437,022	197,696	158,940	17,424	12,577	3,527	46,855
1952	452,600	207,000	162,700	17,700	12,700	3,400	49,100
1953	465,200	215,260	165,090	18,140	12,390	3,340	51,200
1954	479,000	221,000	170,000	19,000	12,200	3,320	52,500
1955	492,980	230,840	171,960	19,400	13,100	3,400	57,250
1956	507,000	239,500	175,160	20,100	12,200	3,340	57,250
1957	523,492	248,385	178,919	20,822	11,136	4,662	59,568
1958	539,940	258,040	182,610	21,590	13,380	3,490	61,830
1959	557,960	268,710	186,800	22,240	12,700	3,490	64,020
1960	558,796	279,460	190,380	22,860	12,840	3,550	66,180
1961	590,140	289,790	192,660	23,600	12,150	3,520	68,420
1962	605,212	297,159	191,852	27,840	10,289	4,236	73,836
1963	621,390	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1964	638,030	320,070	199,830	29,430	8,800	3,910	75,990

* Figures for 1946 unavailable

All figures taken from, Colonial Office, British Guiana Report for the Years, 1946-1964, London: 1946-1965.

APPENDIX I: Biographical Notes.

BEHARRY, Edward

1947: Georgetown Businessman; 1953: Joined the PPP; 1955: Manager of Thunder; 1956: Second Vice-Chairman of the PPP; 1957: Elected to the RPA and appointed a member of the RMB; Elected to the Legislative Council; Minister of Natural Resources; 1959: Dismissed from the PPP; Sat in the Legislature as an Independent.

BENN, Brindley Horatio

Born, Kitty Village, East Coast Demerara; Educated at St James-the-Less Anglican and Central High Schools; Secondary school teacher; Principal, January 1948; 1951: Joined the PPP; 1952: Secretary of Charlestown Group; 1953: Elected to the Executive of the PPP; 1954: Party Organiser, Berbice;

Restricted to New Amsterdam. 1954-56; Five Charges of Being in possession of "Banned Literature during 1954-56; convicted; 1955: Chairman of PPP; 1956: Editor of Thunder and Librarian of the PPP; 1957: Elected for Essequibo River Constituency; Minister of Community Development and Education; 1961: Elected to the Legislature; Minister of Natural Resources.

1964: Elected to the Legislature.

BOWMAN, Fred.

Pork knocker (gold and Diamond miner); shovelman, author; 1951: Joined the PPP; 1953: Elected to the Legislature; 1957: Elected to the Legislature.

1959: Defected from the PPP; 1961: Failed in bid to be reelected to the legislature;

BURNHAN, Linden Forbes Sampson. (1923-1985)

Educated, University of London, 1944: B.A. (London); 1947: LLB. (Hons.);

1946-48: President of W.I. Students' Union; 1947-48: Vice-President, Caribbean Labour Congress; Delegate of World Youth festival; 1950: Radical Nationalist; Chairman, PPP; 1952: President of the BGLU; Elected Member of Georgetown Town Council; 1953: Mayor of Georgetown Town Council; Minister of Education; 1955: Defected from the PPP; Leader of PPP (Burnhamites); 1957: Re-elected to the Legislature; Leader of the Opposition; Leader of the People's National Congress; 1961: Re-elected to the Legislature; Re-appointed Leader of the Opposition; 1964: Appointed Premier.

CAMPBELL, Stephen

Roman Catholic catechist and primary school teacher; 1953: Participated in the successful W.A. Phang campaign in the interior regions; 1957: Became the first Amerindian to be elected to then local legislature; 1959: The only legislator to openly oppose Independence for British Guiana

CANNON, Nelson.

Creole white. Large landed proprietor, Auctioneer, Valuer, Proprietor of The Daily Chronicle, Director of several large Insurance companies; 1914: Radical middle class politician; 1926: Leader of the Popular Party.

Carstairs, C.Y.(1910)

Educated at Edinburgh University; 1937: Assistant Principal Secretary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies; 1938: Assistant Secretary to the West India Royal Commission; 1939: Principal; Colonial Office; 1943: Assistant Secretary; C.O.; 1947: Admin. Sec. Office of the Comptroller; Development and Welfare; W.I.; 1948-49: Secretary of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Committee; 1951: Director of Information Services

1953: assistant Under Secretary of State.

CARTER, John.

B.A. L.L.B. (Middle Temple); Executive Member of League of Coloured Peoples, London; Executive Member of League of Coloured Peoples, Guiana;

1953: Middle Class politician; Leader of the United Democratic Party.

Defeated Political Candidate; 1955: Member of Opposition Delegation to London; 1957: Defeated Political Candidate; Led the UDP into a merger with the Burnhamites forming the People's National Congress; 1961: Elected to the Legislature; 1964: Re-elected to the Legislature.

CARTER, Martin.

1948: Radical Nationalist; Member of the Political Affairs Committee.

1950: Founder member of the PPP; 1953: Elected to the Legislature; Member of the Radical wing of the PPP Leadership; 1953-56: Detained; Compiled book of revolutionary poems, Poems of Resistance; 1956: Tendered his resignation from the PPP.

CHASE, Ashton.

1946: Secretary of BGLU; 1947: Co-convenor of the Trade Union Discussion Group; 1948: British TUC Scholar, Ruskin College, Oxford; 1949: British TUC Scholar to International Labour Office Summer School, Geneva; 1950: Founder Member of the PPP; 1953: Elected to the Legislature; Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce.

D'AGUIAR, Peter Stanislaus

Portuguese businessman and devout Catholic; 1958: Launched the successful Banks Breweries Ltd.; 1959: Attracted the attention of Forbes Burnham but resisted the enticement to support the PNC; Led street protest against the PPP government to levy taxes on the products his brewery; 1960: Formed the United Force; 1961: Elected to the Legislative Council; 1962-64: Conspicuous in the street protests and disturbances; 1964: Supported the PNC and was appointed Minister of Finance.

JACKSON, Andrew

1937: Founded the Post Office Workers' Union; Elected the first President

1939-1945: Special Branch, MI5; 1948-1964: Re-elected President of the POWU; 1949: Founded the Federation of the Union of Government Employees.

1949-1964: President of FUGE; 1953: Delegate at the WFTU Conference in Vienna; British TUC Scholar at Ruskin, Oxford; 1957: Elected to the Legislature.

JACKSON, Sir Donald.

Barrister at Law; 1931: Magistrate; 1936: Senior Magistrate;

1944: Registrar of Deeds, Supreme Court of British Guiana; Registrar West India Court of Appeal; 1949: Puisne Judge, Windward and Leeward Islands.

1950: Chief Justice; 1954: Member of Constitutional Commissioner to British Guiana.

JAGAN, Cheddi.

1938-42: USA, DDS., Howard University; Bsc, (Economics and Sociology)., North Western University; 1943: Returned to Guiana; 1945: Treasure, MPCA;

Founded, Georgetown's Ratepayers Association; 1946: Founded the PAC;

1947: Elected the lone radical Nationalist to the Legislative Council;

President, British Guiana Saw Mill and Forest Workers' Union; Advisor, Guiana Industrial Workers' Union; 1950: Founded the PPP; 1951: Addressed General Council, WFTU and the Berlin Festival of Youths and Students; Attended the UN General Assembly meeting in Paris. Platform speaker in UK general election; 1953: Led the PPP to an electoral victory in April. Chief Minister in May, Deposed in October; 1954: Six months imprisonment in February; 1957: Attended the Ghanaian Independence Celebrations much to the annoyance of Whitehall; 1957, 1961 and 1964: Led the PPP to victory in General elections; 1964: Deposed by PR and the Sandys Constitution.

JAGAN, Janet, nee Rosenberg. 20 October 1920; Chicago, USA.

1938-43: Wayne University; University of Detroit; Michigan State College; Cook County School of Nursing; 1943: Arrived in Guiana; 1944: Organising Secretary of BG Clerks Union; Discussed with Hubert Critchlow the Organisation of a Domestic Workers' Section of the BGLU; 1945: Organised Georgetown Street protest against high cost of living; 1946: Founded the WPEO; 1946: Member of PAC; 1950: First woman elected to Georgetown Town Council; Editor, The Thunder; 1950-1964: General Secretary PPP; 1953: Elected to the Legislature; Appointed Deputy Speaker; Delegate Women's International Organisation, Denmark; Charged repeatedly during the Emergency; First woman imprisoned for a political offence in British Guiana and the British Caribbean; 1953-56: Restricted to her Georgetown; 1957: Minister of Labour, Health and Housing; the first woman to hold a ministerial post in Guiana; 1961: Minister of Home Affairs; 1963: Accused Governor Grey of non-cooperation and tendered her resignation as Minister.

KARRAN, Ram

1937: Member of Transport Workers Union; 1947: Leader of Protest action against European Director of Transport and Harbours Department, Colonel Teare; 1948: Participated in the Enmore Strike action; 1948-50: Executive member of FUGE, Senior Vice-Chairman, BGRPA; 1950-1964: Treasurer of PPP.

1953: Elected to the Legislative Council; Delegate at World Federation of Trade Union Conference, Vienna; On his return he spoke on the Guiana Emergency in the UK until Jagan and Burnham arrived; 1954: Restricted and imprisoned during the Emergency; 1957: Minister of Communications and Works; 1961 and 1964: Re-elected to the legislature.

KENDALL, William Oscar Rudyard.

1943: Town Councillor, New Amsterdam; 1947: Elected to the Legislative Council. (New Amsterdam); 1947-48: Member of BG Labour Party; 1948: Voted against Universal Adult Suffrage; 1951: Member of LCP and UDP; Represented the colony at the Festival of Britain; 1953: Elected to the legislature; Member of Opposition delegation to London during the Emergency; 1954: Member for Communications and Works in the Interim Administration; 1957: Only UDP member re-elected; With the coalition he joined the PNC; 1961 and 1964: Reelected to the Legislature.

KENNEDY, F.

1917: Assistant Clerk to the Colonial Office; 1928: Clerical Officer, Higher Grade; 1939: Staff Officer; 1943: Principal; 1952: Assistant Secretary.

KING, Sydney Evanson.

1946: Convenor, Buxton Discussion Circle; Member, PAC.

1950: Assistant Secretary, PPP; Member BG Peace Council and Demerara Youth Rally; 1952: Delegate, Congress of Peace for Peace, Vienna; 1953: Delegate, WFDY Council Meeting, Prague; Minister of Communication and Works

1953-1956: Detained during the Emergency; 1956: Resigned from the PPP; 1957: Defeated in general election; 1959: Member of PNC and Editor, New Nation; 1961: Advocated Partition and expelled from the PNC; Founded African Society for racial Equality.

LACHHMANSINGH, Joseph Pariag.

1922-30: Bsc, MD., CM. LMS., Dalhousie University; 1948-50: Chairman, Mahatma Ghandi Memorial Committee; 1948-51: President, BGEIA.

1948-1955: President of GIWU; 1950: Member, PPP; 1953: Minister of Health and Housing; 1955: Withdrew from the PPP; Chairman of Burnhamite PPP; 1958: Chairman, PNC.

LUCKHOO, Lionel. A.

Very Successful Indian Barrister-at-Law; 1949: Nominated Member of the Legislature; President of MPCA; 1952: Moved Subversive Literature Bill; Member of National Democratic Party and UDP; 1953: Leader of Opposition delegation to London during the Emergency; 1954: Nominated Official

of Interim Administration; 1955: Leader of National Labour Front; 1956: Mayor of Georgetown Town Council; 1957: Defeated candidate of NLF.
1958: Resigned from NLF.

LUKE, Sir Stephen.

1930: Assistant Principal, Colonial Office; 1934-34: Assistant Principal Secretary to the Secretary of State; 1936: Served in the Palestine Administration; 1937: Principal; 1938: secretary to the Palestine Partition Commission; 1942: Assistant Secretary; 1947: Seconded to Cabinet Office, Under-Secretary; 1950: Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies;
1953: Comptroller, Development and Welfare, West Indies; 1955: Commissioner for the Preparation of Federal Organisation; 1959: Senior Crown Agent for Overseas Governments and Administrations.

MARNHAM, J.E.

1938: Assistant Principal Officer, Colonial Office; 1946: Principal
1948: Assistant Secretary; 1964: Assistant Under-Secretary.

MAYLE, N.L.

1917: Assistant Clerk, Colonial Office; 1920: Clerical Officer; 1923: Clerical Officer, Higher Grade; 1928: Assistant Principal; 1932: Principal Assistant to the Under-Secretary of State; 1936: Principal; 1941: Member of British Delegation to talks with the United States on West Indian bases; 1944: Assistant Secretary, Colonial Office; 1956: Administration Secretary DWWI; 1953: Head, West Indian Department.

Radford. R.E.

1938: Clerical Officer; 1947: Officer of Custom and Excise; Assistant Principal Colonial Office; 1950-51: Principal Secretary, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies; 1951: Principal; 1954: Secretary to the British Constitutional Commission.

RAI, Balram Singh.

1946: Vice-President of the Civil Service Association; 1947: PAC activist;
1949-52: Law Student, London-Middle Temple; 1961: Minister of Home Affairs.
1962: Dismissed from the Party; Resigned his Portfolio; 1964 Formed the Justice Party; Defeated at the polls.

ROGERS. P.

1936: Assistant Principal, Colonial Office; Private secretary to the Governor of Jamaica; 1939: Principal Secretary to the Under-Secretary of State; 1940: Permanent Secretary to the Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs; Principal; 1946: Permanent Secretary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies; 1950: Assistant Secretary; 1953: Assistant Under-Secretary of State; Defence and General, West Indian; 1954: Assistant Under-Secretary of State: West Indian.

SCARLETT, E.W.A.

1924: Clerical Officer, Colonial Office; 1939: Clerical Officer, Higher Grade; 1942: Staff Officer; 1945: Senior Staff Officer; 1946: Principal;

SINGH, Ajodha.

1951: Organised two weeks protest against Sugar industry as member of MPCA; Banned from all sugar estates; 1952: Vice-Chairman, GIWU; Joined PPP;
1953: Elected PPP Member; 1953-56: Detained and imprisoned during the Emergency; 1956: Senior Vice-Chairman, PPP (Jaganite); 1957: Re-elected to the Legislative Council.

SINGH, Jai Narine.

1935: Chief Agronomist, Dept of Agriculture, Venezuela; 1939-46: National Political Activist; President, BGEIA; Vice-President and Trustee, MPCA; Editor of weekly newspaper, Indian Opinion; 1947: Unsuccessful electoral attempt; 1952; Member of PPP; 1953: Controversial appointment

as Minister of Local Government and Social Welfare; 1955: Defected with Burnham; Executive member, PPP (Burnhamite); 1957: Member of Georgetown Town Council; Re-elected to the Legislature; 1960: Formed the Guiana Independence Movement; 1961: Withdrew from the general election.

WATT, I.B.

1939: Assistant Principal, Government of N.Ireland; 1946: Principal, Colonial Office; 1956: Assistant Secretary.

THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, 1953

The Executive Council.

President; The Governor; Sir Alfred Savage, KCMG.

Ex-Officios,

Chief Secretary, Mr John Gutch, CMG., OBE. With responsibility for Police(including immigration) British Guiana Volunteer Force; Public Information Bureau. Public Service and Interior.

Attorney General, Mr. F.W. Holder, QC. With responsibility for Legal Crown Solicitor, Public Trustee and Public Receiver, Registrar(functions other than those of Registrar of the Supreme Court).

Financial Secretary; Mr. W.O. Fraser, OBE. With responsibility for Treasury, Post Office Savings Bank, Customs and Excise, Income Tax.

Elected Ministers,

Dr C. Jagan, Minister of Forests, Lands and Mines. (Leader of the House of Assembly). With responsibility for Agriculture, Forestry, Lands and Mines, Geological Survey.

Sir Frank McDavid, CMG., CBE. Minister without Portfolio.

Mr. L.F.S. Burnham, Minister of Education. with responsibility for Education (including Technical Institute), Queen's College and Bishops' High School.

Mr. Ashton Chase, Minister of Labour Industry and Commerce. With responsibility for Labour, Supplies and Prices.

Mr S.E. King, Minister of Communications and Works. With responsibility for Public Works, Post Office(other than the Post Office Savings Bank) Transport and Harbours and Civil Aviation.

Dr. J.P. Lachhmansingh, Minister of Health and Housing. With responsibility for Medical Registrar General, Government Analyst, Town Planner.

Mr Jai Narine Singh, Minister of Local Government and Social Welfare. With responsibility for Local Government, Social Welfare, Prisons, Essequibo Boys' School and Cooperative Department.

The Legislative Assembly,

The Speaker: Sir Eustace Woolford, OBE., QC.

Ex-Officio Members,

The Chief Secretary, Attorney General, Financial Secretary.

Elected Members,

People's Progressive Party:

Dr. C. Jagan; Leader of the House, Member for the Corentyne Coast;

L.F.S. Burnham, Member for Georgetown, North-East; A. Chase, Member for Georgetown South; S.E. King, Member for Central Demerara; J.P. Lachhmansingh, Member for East Bank, Demerara; Jai Narine Singh, Member for West Demerara; Janet Jagan, Deputy Speaker and Member for Western Essequibo; Fred Bowman (Demerara-Essequibo); Miss J.I.S. Burnham, (Georgetown Central); Mrs Jane Phillips-Gay, (Central Demerara); M. Khan, (Corentyne River); S.M. Lachhmansingh, (Western Berbice); C.S Persaud, (Mahaica-Mahaichony); Ram Karran, (West Central Demerara); Adjodha Singh, (Berbice River); Dr. R.S. Hanoman Singh, (Eastern Berbice); C.R. Wong, (Georgetown South-Central); F.O. Van Sertima, (Georgetown North).

National Democratic Party:

W.O.R. Kendall; (Leader of the Opposition and Member for New Amsterdam); E.F. Correia; (Bartica and the Interior).

Independents:

T.Lee; (Essequibo Islands); W.A. Phang; (North West District).
Mr. Charles A. Carter; (Upper Demerara River) T.S. Wheating; (Pomeroon).

THE STATE COUNCIL

Appointed By the Governor.

Elected President; Sir Frank McDavid; CMG., CBE. (Minister Without Portfolio); W.J. Raatgever, CBE; L.A. Luckhoo; W.A. Macnie, CMG., OBE; Mr. R.B. Gajraj; The Most Honourable Dr. Allan John Knight, Archbishop of the West Indies.

Appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the elected Ministers in the House of Assembly.

U.A. Fingall; G.L. Robertson.

Appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minority Group in the House of Assembly.

P.A. Cummings.

THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATION-1954.

The Executive Council.

President, Governor, Sir Patrick Muir Renison;

Ex-Officios, The Chief Secretary, John Gutch; The Attorney-General, F.W. Holder; Financial Secretary, W.O. Fraser.

Nominated Members, Sir Frank McDavid, Member for Agriculture, Forest, Land and Mines; P.A. Cummings, Member for Labour, Health and Housing; W.O.R. Kendall, Member for Works and Communication; G.A.C. Farnum; G.H. Smellie; R.B. Gajraj; R.C. Tello; W.J. Raatgever.

The Legislative Council.

Speaker, Sir Eustace Gordon Woolford.

Nominated Officials:

W.J. Lord; J.I. Ramphal; T. Lee; W.A. Phang; L.A. Luckhoo; W.A. MacNie; C.A. Carter; E.F. Correia; Rev. D.C.J. Bobb; H. Rahaman; Miss Gertie Collins; Mrs. Esther Day; Dr. H.A. Fraser; Lt. Col. E.J. Harewood; R.B. Jailall; Sugrim Singh.

THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY-1957

The Executive Council

The Governor, Sir Patrick Muir Renison.

Chief Secretary: F.D. Jakeway, External Affairs, Defence and Security; Attorney General: A.M.I. Austin; Financial Secretary, F.W. Essex, C. Jagan: Trade and Industry; B.H. Benn: Community Development and Education; E.B. Beharry: Natural Resources, (previously known as Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines); Janet Jagan: Labour, Health and Housing; Ram Karran: Communication and Works.

Legislative Council

The Speaker, Sir Donald Jackson

Ex-Officio Members,

F.D. Jakeway, Chief Secretary; A.M.I. Austin, Attorney General and F.W. Essex, Financial Secretary.

Elected Members,

Fred Bowman, Balram Singh Rai, Mohamed Saffie and Adjodha Singh, PPP; L.F.S. Burnham, A.L. Jackson, Jai Narine Singh, PPP-Burnhamite; Stephen Campbell, NLF and W.O.R. Kendall, UDP.

Nominated Members,

Robert Elliot Davis. Anthony Martin Fredericks, Rahaman Baccus Gajraj, Henry Joycelyn Makepeace Hubbard, Anthony Greaves Tasker, Rupert Clement Tello.

THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY-1961.**The Executive Council:**

President: Dr. C. Jagan, Premier and Minister of Development and Planning (Member for Central Corentyne); B.H. Benn, Minister of Natural Resources, (Member for Demerara-Coast, West); B.S. Rai, Minister of Home Affairs, (Member for Demerara-Coast, East); R. Karran, Minister of Works and Hydraulics, (Member for Mahaica); R. Chandisingh, Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, (Member for Lower Corentyne River); Dr. Charles Jacob, Minister of Finance, (Member for Vreed-en-Hoop); Dr. F.H.W. Ramsahoye, Attorney-General, (Member for Canals Polder); E.M.G. Wilson, Minister of Communication, (Member for Beoraserie).

The Legislative Assembly:**PPP Members:**

G. Bowman, (Member for Corentyne Central); L.E. McR. Mann (Member for Mahaicony); S.M. Saffee, (Member for Berbice-West); G.L. Robertson, (Member for Leonora); M. Bhagwan, (Member for Essequibo Islands); J.B. Caldera, (Member for Pomeroy); V. Downer, (Member for Berbice-East); M. Hamid, (Member for Demerara-Central); G. McL. Henry, (Member for Houston); D.B. Jagan, (Member for Suddie); H. Lall, (Member for Corentyne-West); M. Shakoor, (Member for Corentyne River).

PNC Members:

L.F.S. Burnham, Leader of the Opposition (Member for Ruimveldt); W.O.R. Kendall, (Member for New Amsterdam); J. Carter, (Member for Werk-en-Rust); E.F. Correia, (Member for Mazaruni-Potaro); N.J. Bissember, Member for Campbellville); W.A. Blair, (Member for Berbice River); R.S. Hugh, (Member for Georgetown-South); J.G. Joaquin, (Member for Kitty); R.J. Jordon, (Member for Upper Demerara River); C.A. Merriman, (Member for LaPenitence-Lodge); H.M.S. Wharton, (Member for Abary).

UF Members:

P.S. D'Aguiar, (Member for Georgetown-Central); S. Campbell, (Member for North-West); R.E. Cheeks, (Member for Georgetown-South); E.E. Melville, (Member for Rupununi).